

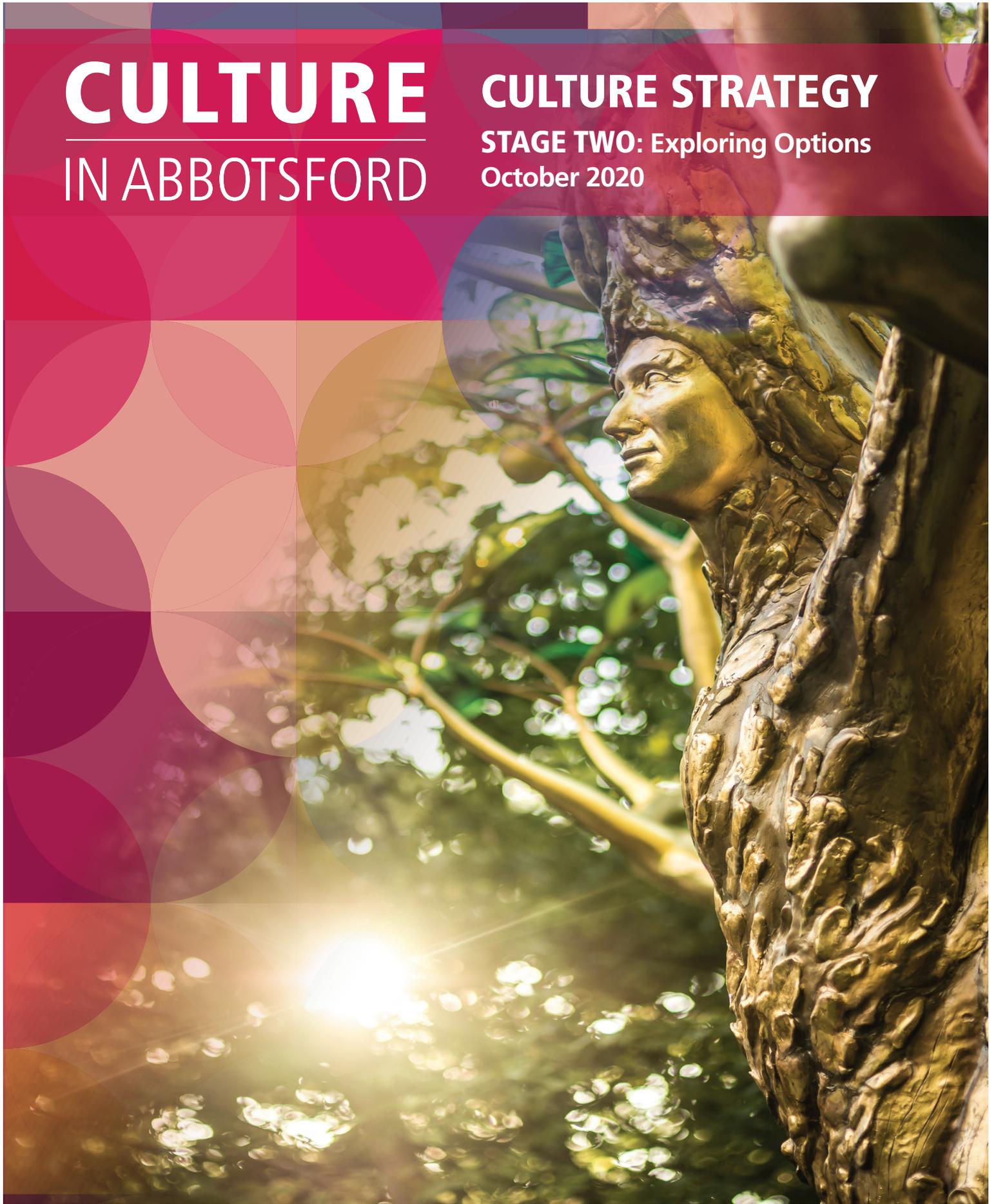
# CULTURE

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# IN ABBOTSFORD

## CULTURE STRATEGY

STAGE TWO: Exploring Options  
October 2020



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Abbotsford is developing a Culture Strategy to guide the management and delivery of Culture services and programs over the next 15 to 20 years. Developed through a five-stage process, the Culture Strategy is assessing the current state of culture in Abbotsford, obtaining input through community consultation, exploring options and ultimately identifying recommendations to support, sustain and grow Abbotsford's cultural ecosystem. This Stage Two Report explores options that build on the findings and emerging themes identified throughout Stage One and provides four overarching themes, with ten preliminary

strategic directions for the City of Abbotsford to consider as it moves into Stage Three - Draft Strategy.

Early consultation with internal and external stakeholders provided important insights that informed the initial emerging trends, that then resonated throughout the later community conversations. In total, approximately 898 residents responded to the public survey, 62 people participated in five workshops, 43 people attended one of three "Host Your Own Engagements" and over 200 contributions were made to the online cultural mapping exercise.



## THEME: MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP

Demonstrating greater municipal leadership can help sustain and grow the local Cultural Ecosystem. This theme explores different opportunities for the City to enhance and improve its role as a funder, partner, planner, investor, regulator, programmer, steward, facilitator and host of culture in Abbotsford.

DIRECTION 1: Determine the City's Cultural Leadership Role

DIRECTION 2: Preserve, Interpret and Present Abbotsford's Story

DIRECTION 3: Leverage Culture for Economic Development



## THEME: SPACES & PLACES

Cultural spaces and places are critical to delivering high quality programs and services. This theme considers possibilities for how public facilities and places can provide opportunities to gather, learn, engage, create and enjoy culture while also ensuring there are the spaces for people to connect through culture physically, mentally, socially and virtually.

DIRECTION 4: Assess and Plan for Cultural Infrastructure and Assets

DIRECTION 5: Connect People and Places



## THEME: COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS

Culture can be a medium by which to foster dialogue, enhance inclusion and improve engagement. This theme focuses on ways the City could engage with different demographic groups, celebrate its diversity while enhancing equity and inclusion and fostering a new relationship with Indigenous Governments and Peoples.

DIRECTION 6: Engage younger Generation

DIRECTION 7: Commit to Creating a New Relationship with Indigenous People

DIRECTION 8: Promote Diversity, Equality and Inclusion



## THEME: OFFERINGS & AWARENESS

Abbotsford's current cultural scene has much to offer and there is much more to come. This theme focuses on promotion, marketing and communication to improve awareness of cultural offerings and how programs can be enhanced, improved and expanded to meet the needs of the growing community.

DIRECTION 9: Communicate all Abbotsford has to Offer

DIRECTION 10: Build New Audiences

# CULTURAL RESOURCES FRAMEWORK

Cultural resources are the various tangible and intangible things that contribute to the culture of a place and are essential to cultural planning and development. This framework represents all of the resources, including institutions, activities and people, that make up Abbotsford's cultural ecosystem.



\*Adapted from Statistics Canada's Canadian Framework for Cultural Statistics

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## PROCESS

A municipal culture plan, or culture strategy, is a document developed by a municipality to enable it to identify, leverage and strengthen its cultural resources and integrate those resources across all facets of local planning. Municipal culture strategies are developed with the collaboration and input from arts and culture stakeholders and the broader community.

This is the first Culture Strategy for the City of Abbotsford building upon the City's' growing commitment to culture in the community. The plan is intended to align with "Abbotsforward" Abbotsford's Official Community Plan, the City's Strategic Plan and the 2018 Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan

In July 2019, the City of Abbotsford engaged Lord Cultural Resources in association with Nordicity to develop a Culture Strategic Plan via a five-stage process:

### Stage 1, Background Research/Key Findings (State of Culture in Abbotsford):

In February 2020 a State of Culture Report was presented to Council that provided a summary of initial stakeholder engagement and background research.

### Stage 2 Exploring Options:

This Stage Two Report explores options that will inform the Draft and Final Strategy. It is intended to build upon the research, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities identified in the Stage One Report, as well as to translate the input received from extensive internal and external stakeholder engagement as part of Stage One into preliminary directions.

### Stage 3, Draft Strategy:

This phase will commence following Council's consideration of the options and directions proposed in this report. The Draft Strategy will be presented to Council in Winter 2020, after which additional feedback from external stakeholders and the community will be sought before the Final Strategy is developed.

### Stage 4, Final Strategy:

Feedback from the Draft Strategy will be collated and a Final Strategy will be presented for Council's approval. The strategy is intended to cover a 15-20 year planning horizon. Normally, once a Strategy is adopted there are no significant changes made. However, in these uncertain times, it is important that the City review and update this long-term plan at regular intervals to ensure the directions and actions remain relevant; therefore the Final Strategy will be considered an "evergreen document."

### Stage 5, Implementation:

A detailed implementation plan will be developed following the adoption of the Final Strategy. This will outline who, where, what, when and how the actions identified in the Strategy will be implemented over five year planning phases. This stage will be ongoing as the City implements the specific directions, actions and goals outlined in the Final Strategy.



"Exit 5" by Lynden Chan, Vinyl reproduction

## PLANNING TEAM

The process for developing the Culture Strategy is being led by an internal planning team composed of key staff within the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, alongside the Lord/Nordicity team.

## ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This Stage Two Report is organized into five chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2 Background Research and Internal Key Findings and Initial Emerging Trends  
State of Culture in Abbotsford

Chapter 3: Community Engagement Key Findings

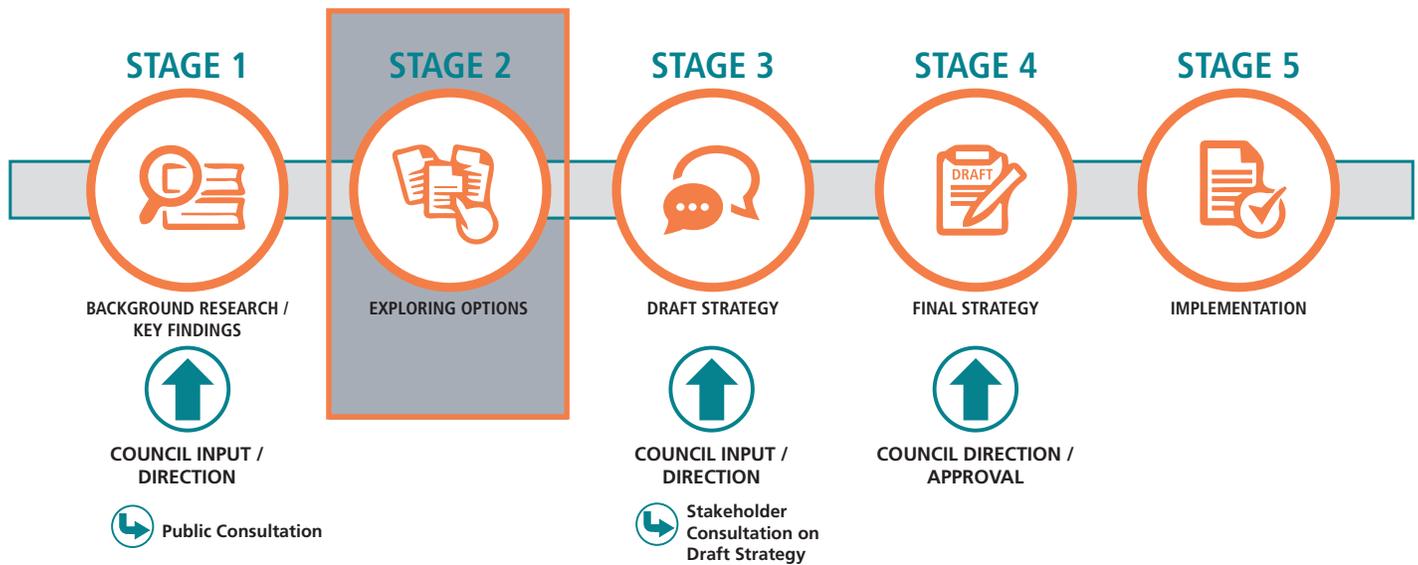
Chapter 4: Exploring Options

Chapter 5: Next Steps



Public Engagement Pop-up for Hoon Park

## PROJECT STATUS: CULTURE STRATEGY



# CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND INTERNAL KEY FINDINGS - STATE OF CULTURE IN ABBOTSFORD

In February 2020, the Stage One Report was presented to Committee-of-the-Whole. This report focused on the current state of Culture in Abbotsford following a thorough review of existing City plans and policies. It examined current local, national and international trends in municipal cultural resources, assets, and offerings. It included

a comparative analysis of other community's cultural offerings, and collective findings revealed through workshops and interviews with important internal and external stakeholders including City staff, fee-for-service partners, and some culture community representatives. Through this examination and consultation, strengths, challenges, and opportunities were identified

and a series of overarching initial trends emerged - trends that informed the preliminary directions and the draft Strategy going forward.

The strengths, challenges and opportunities were identified in the Stage One report as follows:



## Strengths

- Charity
- Diversity
- Volunteerism
- Committed Culture Partners
- Community Facilities
- Natural Heritage
- Independence
- Renewed City focus on Culture



## Challenges

- Social & Geographical Considerations
- Artist Retention / Creative Spaces
- Inclusivity
- Indigenous Engagement
- Heritage & Conservation
- Cultural Tourism
- Funding / Expenditures



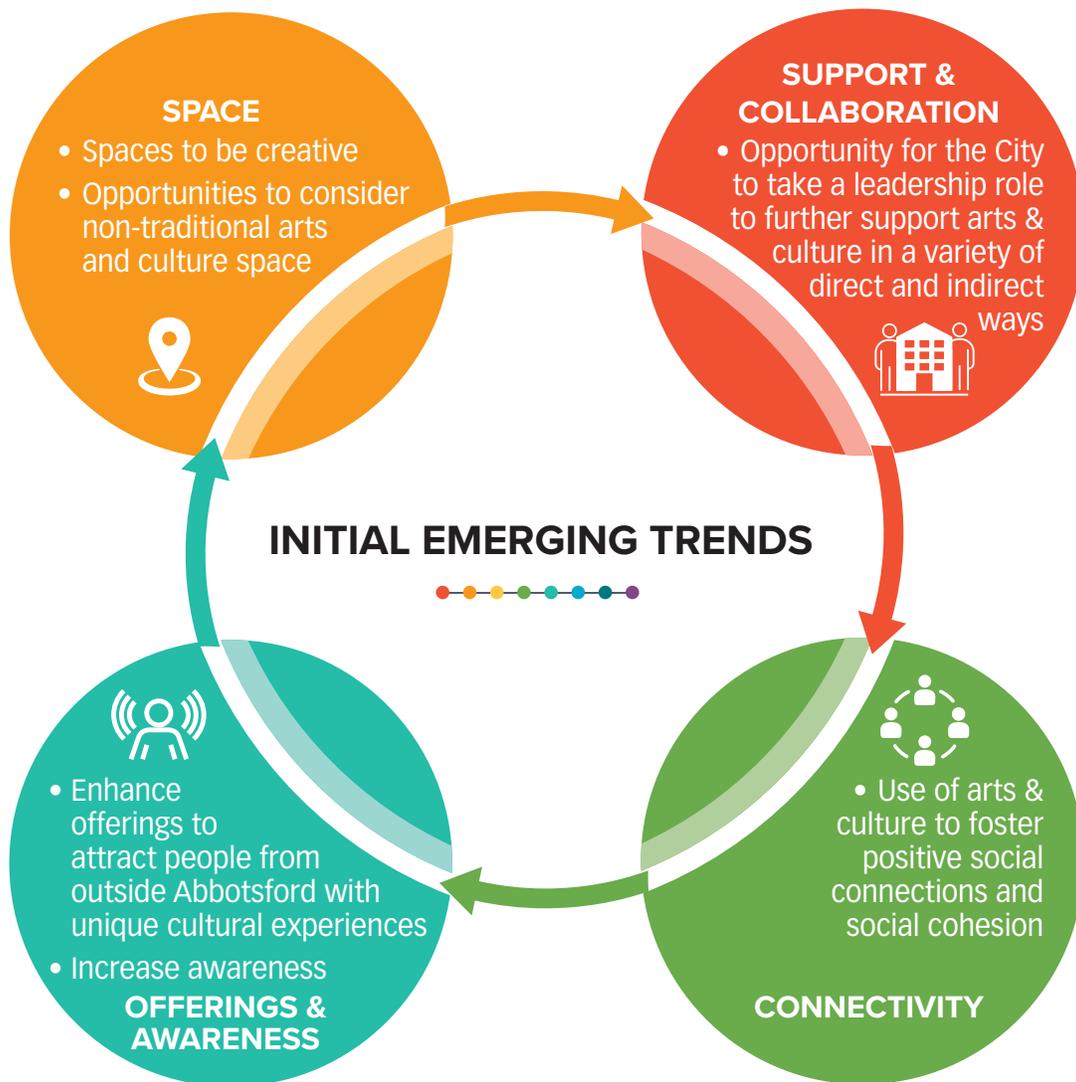
## Opportunities

- Collaboration with Public & Private Partners
- Redefining Cultural Spaces
- Abbotsford Arts Council
- Youth Engagement
- Strong South Asian Culture
- Indigenous Community Engagement
- Role of Municipality
- Cultural Tourism

## INITIAL EMERGING TRENDS

From these initial internal and external stakeholder conversations, four emerging trends were identified as described below. While these initial trends emerged early on, their basic framework was repeated by many voices throughout the public consultation process. They were further explored, developed, and expanded based on additional feedback provided. Through the

consultation, the initial emerging trend of SPACES became the theme of SPACES and PLACES, and the trend of CONNECTIVITY became the theme of COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS. The titles of SUPPORT & COLLABORATION and OFFERINGS & AWARENESS remained with the same.



# CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Consultation with internal and external stakeholders has been ongoing throughout Stage One of this process. It began with discussions with internal staff and key external stakeholders including various culture groups and organizations. A summary of these discussions is available in Appendix A.

Consultation was expanded further in Stage Two to the broader community through February - July in 2020. Surveys, public workshops, and Host Your Own Engagement (HYOE) sessions were advertised, and hosted both online and in-person. Cultural mapping activities were offered in the workshop session, and on-line. In total, 898 residents responded to the public survey, 62 people participated in the in-person or virtual workshops, three HYOE, and over 200 contributions to an online cultural mapping exercise. Ambassadors were deployed in the community through February and early-March to facilitate survey responses.



*Culture Strategy Workshop, February 25, 2020*

## IMPACT OF COVID-19

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began circulating around the world and led to a global public health crisis. By March 2020, much of Abbotsford shut-down with public health officials urging residents to stay home other than for exceptional reasons. While

some of the City's planned external engagement was affected, much had already begun or been completed. Given this, staff felt it was important to continue with the remaining engagement activities to ensure the work completed up to this point remained relevant.

Wherever possible, engagement shifted to digital delivery methods to ensure all in the community could still have a voice. Two public workshops occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and interactive activities and discussion were carried out via the online Zoom platform. These discussions were especially fruitful and indicative of the resilience of Abbotsford's community during difficult circumstances. In discussing these challenges, one participant highlighted the unique importance of culture, stating *"What do you have when you have lost everything? Culture."*

The pandemic has affected almost every aspect of daily life, including regular connections to culture. In Abbotsford, every cultural institutions closed facilities to the public for several months. The continued prohibition of large gatherings has also further exposed the vulnerability of the sector, with many institutions facing significant losses due to reduced revenues from sales, donations and grants. Yet, in the face of crisis, so many turned to culture as a safe haven. While the crisis unfolded, culture institutions mobilized and pivoted to online and digital services ensuring culture was still accessible.

At the time of writing, this crisis is still developing. While the immediate impacts are undeniable, the long-term structural changes and impacts remain to be seen. Given this, the City has forged ahead with its Culture Strategy development, understanding that the ultimate directions and goals will likely remain intact, with potentially revised timelines as the pandemic unfolds and eventually, ends.



*COVID-19 Hearts located at Highstreet Shopping Centre*

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT at a glance

## LET'S TALK ABBOTFORD.CA

WHAT DOES CULTURE  
MEAN TO YOU?

**36**

different responses

**2,049**

VISITORS

**1,024**

CONTRIBUTORS

**926**

RESPONSES



Cultural  
Asset Map

**200+**  
marked

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

IN PERSON  
and VIRTUAL  
WORKSHOPS

**62** Workshop Participants

**20**  
Community  
Pop-Ups

HOST **3**  
YOUR OWN  
ENGAGEMENTS

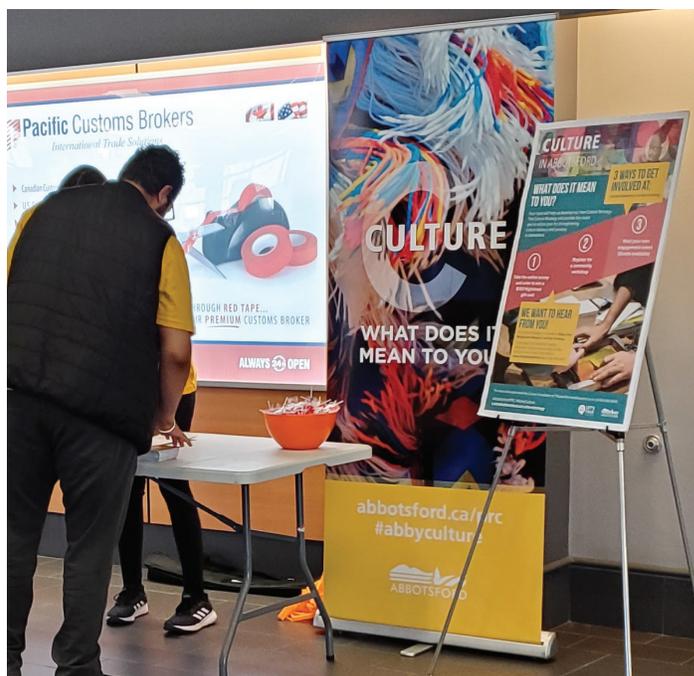


**898**  
SURVEY  
RESPONSES

## FOUR WAYS TO ENGAGE

The City designed its engagement across four main methods to provide a variety of ways for stakeholders and the public to engage. Surveys, public workshops, and Host Your Own Engagement (HYOE) sessions were advertised, and hosted both online and in-person. Cultural mapping activities were offered in the workshop session and on-line. In total, 898 residents responded to the public survey, 62 people participated in the in-person or virtual workshops, three HYOE, were held and over 200 contributions were made to an online cultural mapping exercise. Ambassadors were deployed in the community through February and early-March to facilitate survey responses.

1. PUBLIC SURVEY
2. WORKSHOPS
3. CULTURAL MAPPING
4. HOST YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT



Culture Strategy Pop-Up at the Abbotsford International Airport

5 WORKSHOPS (In Person and Virtual): **62**

HOST YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENTS: **3** - University of Fraser Valley School of Creative Arts, Abbotsford Youth Commission, Abbotsford Filmmakers Group

SURVEY RESPONSES: **898**

POP UPS: **20** Pop Ups at these locations: Abbotsford Recreation Centre, Abbotsford International Airport, Abbotsford Community Library, Bourquin Bus Exchange, Clayburn Village Museum, Clearbrook Library, Fraser Valley Stage Performance at the Abbotsford Arts Centre, Gurmat Centre Workshop held at Eugene Reimer Middle School, Mahogany Apartments, Matsqui Recreation Centre, Sevenoaks Mall, and the University of the Fraser Valley.

# 1. PUBLIC SURVEY

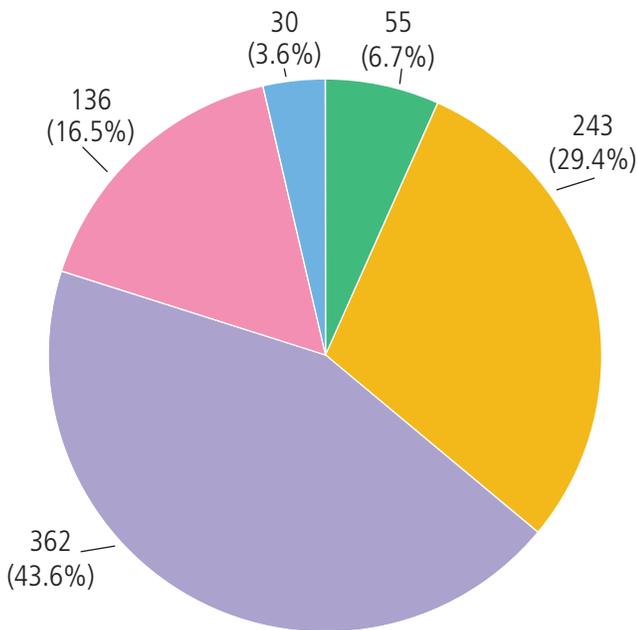
A public survey was conducted from April 23rd, 2019 to July 23rd, 2020 via the Let's Talk Abbotsford survey platform. Approximately 898 responses were gathered, helping to inform the direction and ultimately the goals and objective of the culture strategy.

Of all respondents, the largest proportion (25.7%) were between 25-36 years of age. Most respondents identified as female (67%), with the largest proportion of respondents having gained a bachelor's degree (25.1%). Respondents to the survey identified primarily as North American (32.6%), Eastern European (18.2%) and South Asian (12.2%). The most common household income average for respondents was between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Respondents also reflected a diverse range of neighbourhoods within Abbotsford. Summary survey results are available in Appendix B, and full survey data in Appendix F.

## WHAT WE HEARD - PUBLIC SURVEY

### Satisfaction with current cultural offerings

Of 826 respondents only 36% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the current cultural offerings available within Abbotsford. A significant number of people 44% indicated they were neutral. This could be indicative of a lack of interesting cultural offerings, a general lack of awareness of available actives, or more likely, a combination of both. As discussed below, awareness is certainly a challenge for many residents.

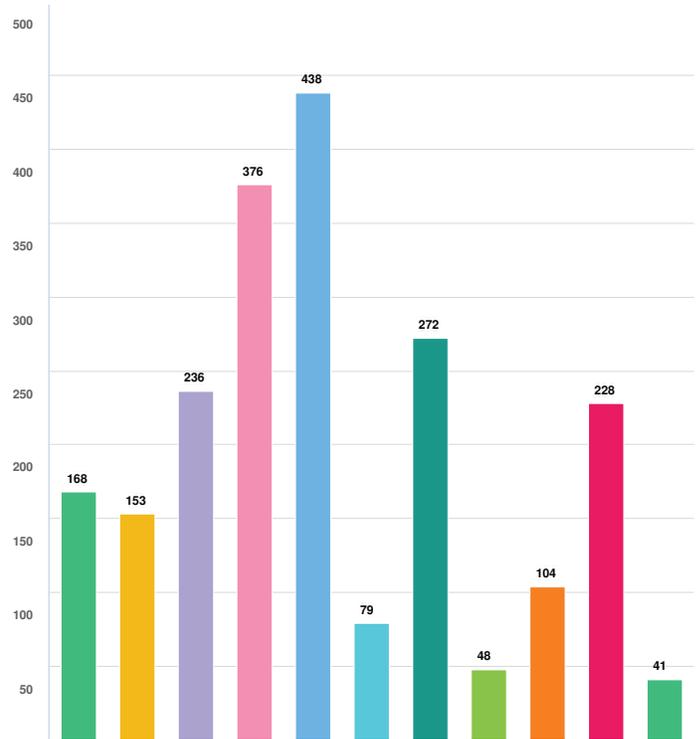


#### Question options

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

## Barriers to participation

When asked what barriers they face to participating in cultural activities, respondents indicated awareness, or lack thereof, lack of quality/quantity and cost as the main barriers. This was explored further during workshops where participants were asked to elaborate on these barriers and how the Culture Strategy could address them.

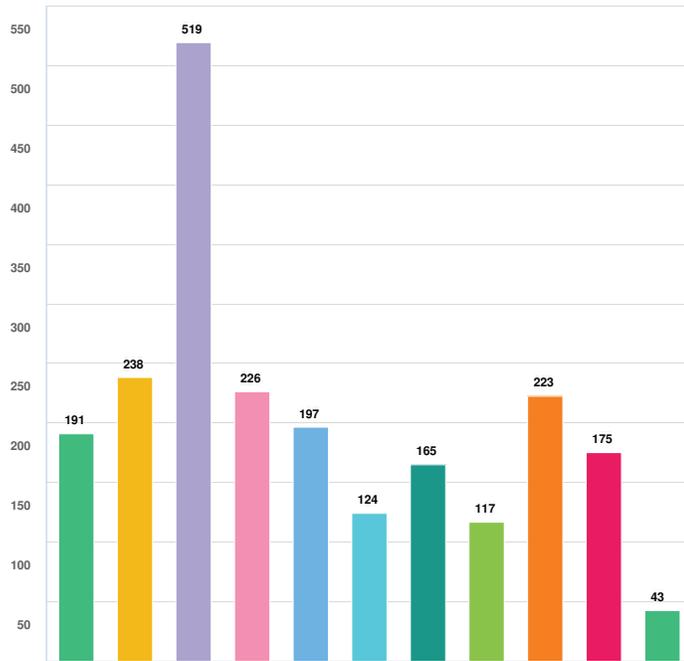


#### Question options

- Transportation
- Location
- Cost
- Feeling uncomfortable, unwelcome or unsafe
- A lack of things that are important to me culturally
- Lack of variety/quality
- Awareness
- Scheduling conflicts
- Language
- Other (please specify)
- I have none

## Municipal Support for Culture

Survey respondents were asked to rank their top three priorities for municipal cultural funding. Overwhelmingly, people indicated they wanted more free and accessible events. This was also echoed in the community workshops where participants expanded on the need for inclusive and accessible activities and events.



### Question options

- New and/or improved arts spaces
- Ensuring arts and culture-based activities are inclusive and accessible to the broadest range of participants
- More free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)
- Activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups
- Increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations
- Youth-focused arts programming
- Indigenous arts programs and opportunities
- Improved marketing for greater awareness
- Other (please specify)
- Public art
- Increase City funding for culture

## SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

- **Primary Engagement with Culture** - The primary engagement with culture for residents involves attending and/or participating in cultural events, programs and/or classes.
- **Primary sources of information on arts, culture, and heritage in Abbotsford** - The majority of respondents received information on arts and culture through the Abbotsford newspaper, word of mouth within the community and external social media.

- **Most popular cultural assets** - The most popular cultural assets in Abbotsford were the Reach Gallery Museum, the Abbotsford Centre, and the Abbotsford Arts Centre, followed by culturally significant spaces including Clayburn Village Historic Conservation Area and the Gur Sikh Temple and Sikh Heritage Museum.
- **Cultural experiences** - Most respondents 73% cited going to the movies (cinema) as the most frequented cultural activity or experience followed by visiting markets, attending live music events and going to public gardens. The most notable cultural events identified by respondents were Canada Day and the Abbotsford Berry Festival, followed by the Mill Lake Concert Series and Jam in Jubilee.
- **Expenditure** - It was found that most households (66%) spend less than \$50 per month on cultural activities within Abbotsford.
- There was also overwhelming agreement that the primary positive impact of culture in Abbotsford is that "it brings people together."
- Respondents were provided the opportunity to share openly about what they think the City should consider or what could have been missed in the survey questions. Live theatre was noted as a community priority, particularly as there is a growing theatre community. Highlighting and honouring First Nations, as well as inclusion of all age groups, were also noted as important priorities.



City of Abbotsford Canada Day, Dale Klippenstein



## What should be the Municipal Priorities?

**More free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)** - participants remarked that subsidization of cultural events by the City and its partners could make culture more inclusive for low-income families and community members.

**Ensuring arts and culture-based activities are inclusive and accessible to the broadest range of participants** Also noted by participants was the need for **activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups**; echoing a common theme discussed throughout all focus groups, there is a need for intercultural and interfaith interaction, which is important given Abbotsford's unique demography.

**Increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations** - participants noted that relying on private businesses and corporate sponsorship for funding of arts and cultural programming is not sufficient, and that the sector requires more funding from the City.

Participants also noted the need for **new and improved arts spaces**. The concept of found spaces is seen by participants as supplementary to robust and sustainable existing infrastructure for the arts and culture. Improved facilities would both engage the public in more cultural events and foster new, visually impactful expressions of art in the City.

**More Indigenous arts programs, improved marketing** for greater awareness, and more free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals).

## Workshop Conversation Space - Solutions-Focused Thinking

Workshop participants were asked to tell us their main barriers to participating and the main challenges to a vibrant cultural ecology. Their creative solutions can be found in Appendix C, but these are their priorities for change, making the City priorities as part of a solutions-focused conversation space. Participants noted the following challenges, and suggested solutions, more of which can be found in Appendix C.

- **Lack of variety of cultural offerings**  
Proposed solutions included the creation of a dense food/cultural district (in the downtown area), a concerted City-led effort to preserve heritage, as well as increased frequency and reach of programming of existing organizations

- **Lack of Digital Advertising - one place to access culture events and offerings**  
A central calendar as well as physical "What's Happening" boards in public spaces could increase awareness, from mountain-biking community meetups to cultural/religious festivals. This kind of advertising could be made available in several languages.

- **Creating space and opportunities for Indigenous Art/Programs, opportunities to share more stories**  
Throughout discussion, the need to ensure that places and spaces are made for Indigenous Peoples to tell their stories is of utmost importance

## PROCESS FEEDBACK

Criticisms of our Stage One report were also noted by many culture groups at the start of our workshop engagements. (Appendix D)

Many of Abbotsford's culture professionals are concerned that the City is not investing in purpose-built spaces for arts and culture, and may be relying too much on existing, multipurpose facilities as well as the concept of found spaces. They also noted the State of Culture report did not seem to be fully representative of Abbotsford's cultural offerings, unique needs and identity and requires deeper thought on wider definitions of culture in the City.

## WORKSHOP KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the workshops solidified and greatly enhance the initial emerging trends we heard through Stage One. The trends of Connectivity, Support and Collaboration, Spaces, and Offerings & Awareness were explored and then were propagated with greater detail such as specific challenges cited, solutions proposed, and areas to explore more deeply made more evident by the rich conversations participants had with the facilitators. Participants wanted the outcomes of better and more inclusive cultural offerings, more concerted effort into increasing awareness, the City

to address gaps in spaces to be creative, and more support for inclusive and accessible arts offerings and programs. Culture was cited as an economic driver, and the catalyst of vibrant urban neighbourhoods.

Lack of awareness of cultural offerings and assets remains a key issue for culture in Abbotsford, further emphasizing the potential for a robust outreach program through a centralized or “one-stop-shop” for advertising cultural events, facilities and services, both online and offline.

There is a keen desire for cultural development to result in the bringing together of diverse communities, and the use of culture as a catalyst for a more vibrant, connected and welcoming Abbotsford.

The City needs to actively invest in and improve its relationships with local culture service organizations. Significant negative feedback was received regarding the process, methodology and findings from the Stage One Report. Several of these organizations ultimately declined to participate in the public engagement activities despite invites from the City. These organizations decided to provide their input in writing following the Stage One report presentation, all of which can be found in Appendix C. This input has been used to inform the key findings as discussed in this Chapter, however the response to the Stage One Report needs to be acknowledged as a key finding in and of itself as it relates to the City’s reputation and relationships with and amongst many culture service organizations in Abbotsford.

Results and responses from the workshops can be found in Appendix C.



Culture Strategy Pop-Up at workshop held by the Gurmat Centre

### 3. CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING

The Cultural Mapping activity allowed participants gather around a large-scale geographical map of Abbotsford, or go online at [www.letstalkabbotsford.ca/culturestrategy](http://www.letstalkabbotsford.ca/culturestrategy) to think about culture in the framework of spaces/places, events and experiences, delving into both the tangible and intangible aspects of culture. This activity was especially bolstered by the Cultural Resources Framework which helped participants to ponder the vastly diverse definitions of what culture can mean to them, from winery tours to book clubs.

The activity was divided into two parts; first, participants were asked to **identify spaces/places, experiences and events that they already exist** in Abbotsford; second, participants were asked to identify spaces/places, experiences and events that they would like to see.

Cultural Asset Mapping is the process of collecting, recording and synthesizing information in order to describe the cultural resources, networks, links, and patterns of usage of a given community or group. Through this exercise we can see where there are gaps and community needs.



Detail of cultural asset map

## WHAT DID WE SEE - CULTURAL MAPPING

The value of this kind of activity was clear, and **many participants noted that they were both pleased and surprised to see how much Abbotsford has to offer**, and that they had not been aware of these offerings before attending the workshop. This affirmation emphasizes not only the opportunities to develop Abbotsford's culture, but also to use culture as a tool for community-building and a sense of pride for residents. Thus far, hundreds (200) of pins have been added to the digital map, creating an archive of cultural venues, events and experiences available throughout the City, as well as cultural offerings that residents would like to see in the future. The summary below identifies feedback given from the first three in-person focus groups.

Common themes of spaces/places were found. These included:

- Spaces where art/theatre is exhibited e.g. Gallery 7 Theatre, painted art murals located in alleyways of downtown Abbotsford and Abbotsford Children's Theatre.
- Spaces offering services e.g. Archway Community Services, places of worship, Clearbrook Library.

- Spaces of cultural/historical value e.g. Sema:th Longhouse, Mennonite Heritage Museum, Clayburn Village, Gur Sikh Temple.
- Natural spaces e.g., Fish Trap Creek, parks and trails.
- Food and agricultural venues e.g. Fieldhouse, Olde Abbey Ales, Ravens Brewing, Circle Farm/Heritage Tours and Ripples Winery.
- A list of societies and community organizations also emerged on the map, demonstrating that those involved in arts, culture and heritage have existing ways of connecting with each other.
- Experiences of natural heritage e.g. hiking trails at Downes Bowl, Eagle Mountain Lookout, McDonald Park Official Astronomy viewing point, unique geological features and Aldergrove Regional Park.
- Agricultural events are of great significance in Abbotsford e.g. Tulip Festival, Agrifair, Berry Festival and ADBA Wine Walk.
- Events of cultural significance e.g. Diwali, Canada Day, Vaisakhi and UFV's hosting of several culturally significant events.
- Commercial events e.g. Abbotsford Flea Market, Tradex RV Show, Tradex Pet Show, MCC Sale and Festival.



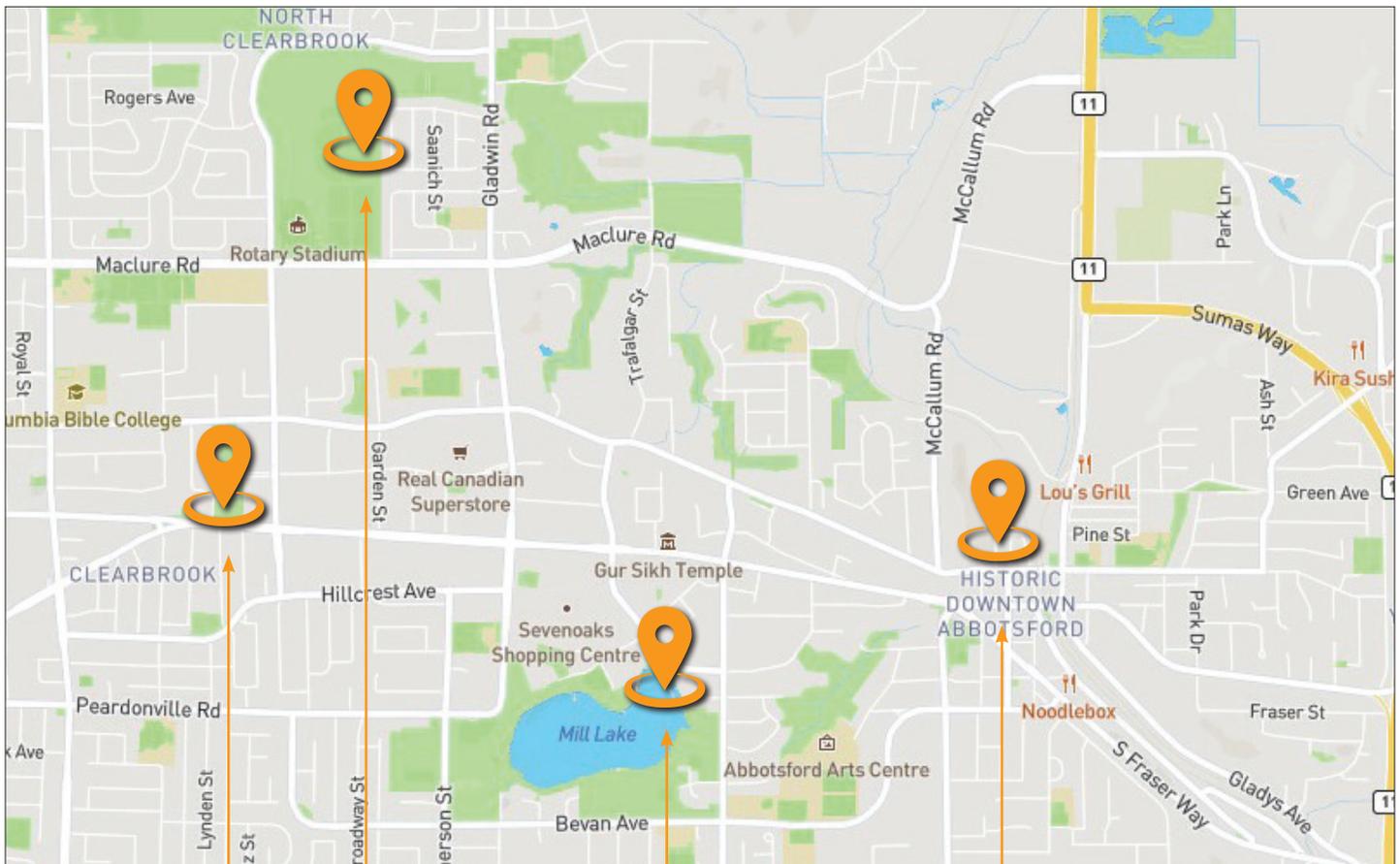
Workshop: Cultural asset mapping exercise, February 25, 2020

## Desired Spaces/Places, Events and Experiences

Participants were particularly keen to identify where they would like to see more venues, events and cultural experiences in Abbotsford. Having identified existing cultural assets on the map, the following were noted:

### Performance Venues, Experiences , Events

## CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING



Pride events, intercultural events (such as the one Archway previously ran), Diwali, and international festivals were also noted by participants.

"Tourist in your own town" experiences e.g. art crawl, urban wine bar experience, signage boards, bus tours of historic sites and signed trails/hikes

A commitment to preserving and bettering natural spaces e.g. a community garden for medicines, better lit paths at Mill Lake and well-built trails.

A dedicated and permanent outdoor performance space at Mill Lake.

Performance Venues: e.g. a venue for bands to play with good sound, multiple theatre spaces throughout the City, and an open plaza in the Downtown area.

More culinary spaces e.g. Tuscan Farm gardens, a permanent local food market downtown or a dedicated food and market district for the entire community.  
Food festivals e.g. food truck festival, Diner en Blanc, food and culture district. More frequent performances e.g. Shakespeare/Live theatre in the Park.

## CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING KEY FINDINGS

As expected, many physical cultural assets related to arts and heritage was located close to the City Centre and Historic Downtown, while many agricultural/natural heritage-related assets, existing and desired, were dispersed throughout the surrounding areas of Abbotsford.

Many participants were surprised to learn about new and other cultural assets from the map. The map also showed the wide breadth and variety of resources that are considered cultural assets in the community. The activity also allowed for the visioning of what Abbotsford could be through the enrichment and increase of cultural resources in the City.

It is important to also note that amenable zoning is highly connected to creating a strong cultural ecology. To accommodate participant's ideas in many areas of Abbotsford, zoning would need to be changed in order to enable the development of a vibrant, culturally-rich atmosphere. The mapping activity highlighted this requirement.



Abbotsford Filmmakers "Host Your Own Engagement" Session, courtesy of Mitch Huttema

## 4. HOST YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT

The "Host Your Own" community engagement sessions allowed key interest groups in Abbotsford to share their thoughts on arts, culture and heritage in the city, and where they feel they play a role in the future of culture. The summary of each "Host Your Own" Engagement can be found in Appendix E.

In total, three 'Host Your Own Engagement' focus group sessions took place, involving the following stakeholder groups:

- [Abbotsford Youth Commission](#)
- [University of the Fraser Valley](#)
- [Abbotsford Filmmakers Group](#)

### WHAT WE HEARD - HOST YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT

#### Abbotsford Youth Commission

The Abbotsford Youth Commission led 19 youth through a youth focused culture workshop. It was held online via Zoom.

#### YOUTH NOTED STRENGTHS OF CULTURE IN ABBOTSFORD

Youth identified celebrations and events such as [Canada Day](#), [Sikh parades](#) and [Agrifair](#) as just some of the events that demonstrate Abbotsford's strength through diversity.

Land acknowledgments were noted as particularly integral to protocols before meetings, as well as historic sites and monuments such as Abbotsford's Sikh Temple, the first in North America. Youth noted a "strong sense of various communities", "lots of diversity" both in schools, restaurants, community centres, workplaces and places of worship.

#### YOUTH NOTED CHALLENGES

Challenges were noted in accessing arts and culture in Abbotsford. Among these challenges were transportation, lack of awareness, and a lack of connectivity between cultural groups. Fear of judgement or being a minority persists between communities, as does the language barrier faced by many youth's family members. Youth are also concerned about the trustworthiness of information shared about events online - parents would be less

concerned about safety of allowing their adolescent children to attend events if they were shared on a centralized, City-run platform.

## YOUTH SOLUTIONS

Despite challenges, youth were excited to learn that culture is a priority for the City and expressed interest in seeing the City get more involved in cultural learning opportunities within the classroom. Solutions proposed by youth included more advertisement, more legitimate support from the City, promotion within schools and “education of different cultures in school to youth.”

### University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) - School of Creative Arts (SoCA) Community

Members of the UFV and SoCA community shared thoughts on culture in Abbotsford and what it means to them both as residents of Abbotsford and as representatives of the University. Participants included a diverse array of the UFV community members, including faculty, alumni, and administrative staff.

Challenges facing the UFV in supporting arts and culture in Abbotsford include **lack of awareness**, **lack of variety/quality** of cultural offerings, and **scheduling conflicts**. Like many other stakeholders, UFV community members would like to see more **signage** as well as a **one-stop-shop**, online and offline, to find cultural information across all organizations. Participants see issues related to adequate **programmable space** linked to the lack of variety and quality felt among stakeholders – Abbotsford has a large theatre presence but lacks a professional theatre in which to perform. Because of these challenges, many **SoCA alumni** leave Abbotsford after graduation due to **perceived lack of opportunity**

The UFV community would like to see the City increase funding for local arts and cultural organizations, through **grants that support operating costs**, promoting the value of the arts, and **subsidized marketing**. New and improved, **purpose-built spaces** are key to developing the arts and culture - a priority echoed among most stakeholders. **Indigenous arts programs and opportunities** were also highlighted as key priorities. It was noted the importance of bringing to the fore the rich culture and heritage of Indigenous communities on the land on which Abbotsford is located.

The celebration of LGBTQ2+ community and Pride events were noted as a missing component to the Abbotsford Cultural Resources Framework, despite the community’s growing presence. Participants noted that in developing the Culture Strategic Plan, the City should consider how we might move beyond “celebrating diversity,” and instead take it further by establishing a distinctly anti-racist foundation to the strategy.

### Abbotsford Filmmakers

Six local filmmakers met up for a socially distanced discussion guided by the questions set out in the facilitators guide. Organizers used a projector to display several of the infographics, including the Cultural Resources Framework, and questions from the guide.

Some of the highlights included conversation about the **opportunity to expansion** of the film industry in Abbotsford thanks to relatively lower costs and **accessibility**. The group expressed that the **revitalization of downtown Abbotsford** and events like **Jam in Jubilee** are fundamental to building community in Abbotsford, of which filmmakers are a part.

The filmmakers note resources, **as well as awareness and accessibility, as key requirements** to develop and grow. Participants expressed a wish to see more public access to education and equipment for filmmaking, particularly for underprivileged youth in Abbotsford, as well as the opportunity to partner with the City to share filmmaking activity on online City platforms. There is also concern regarding the red tape and **high cost associated with permitting processes** and insurance, discouraging most independent and low-budget filmmakers to apply for permits. Participants also noted difficulty in finding affordable and **rentable space to host screenings**, despite support for filmmakers within the local community. Filmmakers would like to see the development of **financial grants**, partnership with the City, access to space to host community events, and access to independent film permits as the City considers its cultural strategy going forward.

# CHAPTER 4: DRAFT VISION & PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS

This section provides a draft Vision for Culture in Abbotsford and defines the preliminary themes and directions the City should consider as it moves into Stage Three - Draft Strategy. This section builds on the findings from the Stage One - Report and incorporates the further findings from the external community consultation.

## VISION

Rich Cultural Experiences for All: Abbotsford will be a place of rich and diverse cultural experiences and resources that are the essential ingredients of a vibrant urban community of connected neighbourhoods.

## PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS

 <p><b>MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Determine the City's Cultural Leadership Role</li><li>2. Preserve, Interpret and Present Abbotsford's Story</li><li>3. Leverage Culture for Economic Development</li></ol>	 <p><b>SPACES &amp; PLACES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Assess and Plan for Cultural Infrastructure and Assets</li><li>5. Connect People and Places</li></ol>	 <p><b>CONNECTIONS &amp; COMMUNITY</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Engage Younger Generations</li><li>7. Commit to Creating a New Relationship with Indigenous Peoples</li><li>8. Promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</li></ol>	 <p><b>OFFERINGS &amp; AWARENESS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Communicate All Abbotsford has to Offer</li><li>10. Build New Audiences</li></ol>
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## THEME: MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP



Demonstrating greater municipal leadership can help sustain and grow the local Cultural Ecosystem. This theme explores different opportunities for the City to enhance and improve its role as a funder, partner, planner, investor, regulator, programmer, steward, facilitator and host of culture in Abbotsford.

### DIRECTION #1: DETERMINE THE CITY'S CULTURAL LEADERSHIP ROLE

**The City must play a vital role in providing support to the culture and creative sectors in Abbotsford to survive and flourish. Taking a greater leadership role will require strategic investments of funding, time and expertise. These investments need to be carefully planned and designed with the long-term needs of the community in mind.**

The City primarily supports culture through funding agreements with three local culture organizations: The Reach Gallery Museum, Abbotsford Arts Council and Heritage Abbotsford Society. These are longstanding arrangements that the City has generally sustained year over year. Each of these organizations are economically dependant on the City as the primary funder, however there are few to no objectives or requirements that link funding to the City's Culture Services goals or priorities.

As the City moves forward with a new focus on Culture, it should set a clear mandate and expectations that connects funding with the achievement of specific goals. It should also consider the most effective way to deliver its wide array of culture programs and services. Given this, the City should conduct a review of its governance, funding and delivery model for cultural services. While the City should consider increasing its financial support for culture as discussed further below, a thorough review as a first step will help ensure investments are strategic, responsive and provide the

best value to the community.

The Stage One Report revealed that the City currently falls short of municipal cultural spending compared to the median per capita spend across the country, as well as comparator cities in BC and the rest of Canada. As of 2020, the total per capita allocation for culture in the City is \$6.24. The average per capita spending in municipalities can vary significantly; however, Abbotsford's allocation is notably lower than comparator cities like Kelowna, Delta and Lethbridge. It is also lower than neighbouring communities such as Chilliwack, Township of Langley and Mission. Appropriate funding to local organizations and artists is critical to sustaining and growing culture within Abbotsford. A dedicated grant program is a common way municipalities support cultural endeavours and is something the City could consider implementing in the short term.

While a specific per capita funding target has not been recommended, the City should consider increasing its financial support for culture over time. The governance review previously noted will help guide the City in making strategic investments, which ultimately could come in the form of additional funding for City-led programs and events, fee-for-service organizations, and new or increased grants for community events, festivals and cultural activities.

Increased investment by the City is only part of the equation, however. By leveraging the City's financial support, cultural organizations can and should engage with other levels of government and the private sector to enhance and expand their own revenue streams.

Culture organizations must build their own capacity to give them the ability to take on these funding challenges - and the City can help. While the City provides some capacity building support for community organizations through the Involve Abbotsford Forum, more can be done.

The City can invest its time and expertise to assist organizations in a number of ways including sharing data and research. The City can also provide or facilitate e-training forums for volunteer attraction, development and retention. Other areas include governance training, finance, human resources, staff and Board training, risk management, and sponsorship.

The City could also support the arts and culture community through greater and easier accessibility to municipal services. The consultation process

identified the City's processes and policies as a barrier to organizations delivering cultural activities and programs. Simplification of Municipal processes and procedures for licensing, permits, security and other services would help organizations immensely, particularly smaller ones who depend largely on volunteers, to present cultural events and programs. To support this, the City might consider combining its Events and Culture Service divisions to establish a combined Culture and Events office to create greater synergy and efficiencies while acting as an important resource to support culture in the community.

Planning for the long-term cultural needs of Abbotsford will require regular and ongoing attention. Culture is one of the four key pillars of community sustainability along with economic prosperity, social equity and environmental responsibility and therefore should be integrated in all City planning processes and policies. This includes the Official Community Plan, Master Plans, neighbourhood plans and park plans. Culture impacts how neighbourhoods, parks, facilities, streets and programs are planned and designed. Culture also informs bylaws, zoning and policies. Reflecting the cultural needs of the community throughout City plans and policies will support an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of culture. This broad-based understanding and appreciation for culture can also help the City and the individual cultural organizations' leverage private and philanthropic support for cultural assets and initiatives.

In addition to integrating culture into all areas of planning, the City should update its culture-related plans and policies (i.e. Public Art Policy and Heritage Management Plan) that are outdated to ensure they are relevant and meet the ongoing needs of the community.

## **DIRECTION #2: PRESERVE, INTERPRET AND PRESENT ABBOTSFORD'S STORY**

**Confirm the City is creating the necessary governance structures to promote and enable it, and local heritage organizations and individuals, to best preserve, interpret, and present Abbotsford's ongoing story. Recognizing heritage as a value versus a specific object will allow for a deeper understanding of our past, present, and future.**

Oversight of heritage in Abbotsford is a shared responsibility. The City funds Heritage Abbotsford Society and the Reach Gallery Museum, in part, for the preservation and interpretation of heritage, including the City Archives, which are located at and managed by the Reach Gallery Museum. Several City departments also play a key role in heritage management, preservation and programming including PRC, Planning and Development and Legislative Services. While different organizations and departments play a role, there is a lack of clarity regarding the mandates of the various players.

The governance review, noted in Direction #1, should examine the delivery model for heritage services between the external organizations and the City to ensure that heritage services are effective and efficient, without duplication of effort. Internally, the City should clarify the roles and responsibilities of each department related to heritage management and programming. Doing so will help build a solid foundation to support heritage now and into the future.

Since the City developed its Heritage Strategic Plan in 2005, heritage planning and management practices have evolved. There is a need to update and develop the policies and procedures that support Abbotsford's natural and built heritage. Fortunately, some of this work is already underway. The Urban Forest Strategy, currently under development, should identify priorities to protect and sustain natural heritage areas. Furthermore, the planned Heritage Inventory will provide a framework for future planning. Other areas require more work. As noted in the Stage One Report, the City could improve its processes to document and manage heritage assets. Outdated processes should be reviewed and revised, including the process to identify, recognize and add assets to the Community Heritage Register. The City may also consider updating its Heritage Management Plan that would provide a framework and policy to guide how heritage is assessed, recognized, preserved, programmed and shared.

Cultural heritage not only includes built heritage sites such as monuments and historic buildings, but also cultural traditions, practices and values. These intangible cultural heritage assets are represented in a multitude of ways from traditional story telling, place making, and performing arts, to social practices, and festivals. There are organizations, community groups, cultural communities, Indigenous groups and individuals who have stories to tell. These are told in

many different ways - including through music, art, food and others. The City can support and encourage story telling in its many forms. Bringing new voices and perspectives to old stories and traditions, can foster a better understanding of different individuals and groups and their own experiences. This could be achieved through grants, programming, and partnerships.

Heritage programming is an important method to build awareness and education of Abbotsford's local history. Much of the City's current heritage programming is facility-based and delivered through its cultural partners. The engagement process indicated an interest for more and different programming locally, especially more firsthand programs such as nature walks and culinary experiences. The City could facilitate and support new opportunities to share and interpret Abbotsford's local history.

As previously noted, it will be important that the City invite new and different voices to sharing Abbotsford's history and story. While there is an interest in greater Indigenous heritage programming, it is not necessarily up to the City to tell these stories and they should defer to the local First Nations on these matters. However, the City can create the room and opportunity for First Nations to do so and the consultation results indicated this was considered a high priority for many. More on Indigenous relations is discussed later in Direction #7.

### **DIRECTION #3: LEVERAGE CULTURE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**The cultural sector is an important contributor to the economic health of communities. The City should use culture as an important tool to boost its economic advantage over competing communities.**

Abbotsford is the anchor, hub, and largest City in the Fraser Valley. With one of the fastest growing economies in the country and a population soon to reach 200,000, there are significant opportunities to improve and grow the economic impact of culture in Abbotsford. In BC alone, cultural products had an estimated \$7.1 billion economic impact in 2017. Culture is also important in the way it contributes to a City's reputation and brand.

One of the ways to leverage culture would be for the City to build a role for culture in economic and tourism planning. While this planning is likely happening on a community level, the City could be more intentional by integrating culture into its economic development plans by highlighting the impact of culture on the local economy. This could be achieved by simply increasing the "touch-points" between the City's Economic Development and Culture Services divisions.

Cultural tourism was highlighted as a challenge in the Stage One Report due to insufficient quantity and quality of culture offerings. Yet, as noted by many during the engagement process, Abbotsford has so much to offer – especially surrounding its agricultural heritage and burgeoning food and craft beer scene.

The public engagement process also identified a strong desire for more events and festivals amongst residents. This could also enhance tourism opportunities and attract more visitors to Abbotsford. Enhancing cultural tourism would likely mean improving understanding of the value culture plays in attracting visitors and the importance of developing a cultural identity that separates Abbotsford from other communities. This may involve developing, supporting and hosting more or different events and festivals that align with other tourism opportunities, developing a marketable cultural tourism identity and facilitating and encouraging cultural and tourism collaboration.

Feedback through the engagement process also points to the opportunity to improve collaboration between cultural organizations and businesses. The City can support, lead and facilitate engagement between the culture and business communities to leverage cultural assets, events and programs towards greater economic vibrancy. Conducting a Culture Economic Impact Assessment could contribute to this connection by providing clear data that demonstrates the economic benefits of culture. The City could also leverage its committees of Council to discuss relevant cultural and economic matters and incentivizing culture and business organizations to collaborate.

## THEME: SPACES & PLACES



Cultural spaces and places are critical to delivering high quality programs and services. This theme considers possibilities for how public facilities and places can provide opportunities to gather, learn, engage, create and enjoy culture while also carving out the spaces for people to connect through culture physically, mentally, socially and virtually.

### DIRECTION #4: ASSESS AND PLAN FOR CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS

**The City should assess the short, medium and long-term cultural facility requirements to support current and future needs, as well as finding new and innovative ways of optimizing current civic facilities and found spaces.**

A continuum of spaces are required to support a vibrant cultural ecosystem, including libraries, galleries, performance spaces, museums, districts and artist spaces. The City plays a pivotal role in developing and maintaining cultural places and facilities, as well as planning for and activating creative spaces. This requires continuous planning and assessment to ensure their sustainability and ability to meet the needs of this growing community

Throughout the engagement process, it was noted by several cultural organizations that the City is not investing in much needed purpose-built space for arts and culture. The public consultation indicated specific interest in more performance spaces including an outdoor performance plaza at Mill lake and/or the civic precinct. However, more information is needed regarding what specific spaces are actually required, what needs they would serve and how new infrastructure would be operated, managed or funded.

While the City is responsible for the planning, development and maintenance of civic cultural facilities, it is also incumbent upon cultural sector partners to demonstrate its need for new space. A strong, evi-

dence-based understanding of actual needs will be required to support development of any new facilities. The City should therefore consider assessing the short, medium and long-term needs of current and new infrastructure in collaboration with local culture service organizations. This assessment may include condition assessments and facility utilization studies of current facilities. A current and future demand analysis would also assist the City in prioritizing investments in all culture infrastructure including heritage centres, outdoor performance plazas, galleries, libraries and indoor performance spaces.

It is important to commit to developing new cultural spaces. However, it is equally important to use available spaces to their best and highest potential. During the public engagement process, participants noted that found spaces would be supplemental to traditional infrastructure. However, the shutdown of traditional public and private spaces as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated the importance of found spaces as many residents took advantage of local outdoor spaces as impromptu play and safe gathering places. Furthermore, the need for accessible and barrier-free spaces was strongly noted throughout the engagement process, which found spaces could also support.

Utilizing current facilities and spaces can enhance the availability, affordability and accessibility of culture for all in the community. There are many potential “found” spaces that provide tremendous opportunities for place making at this grass roots level – for community groups, artists and organizations, and individuals.

Optimizing current spaces may involve identifying, collating and mapping current civic facilities and spaces that could be utilized for culture programs and activities, planning for and including creative spaces (i.e. gallery space) within new and existing infrastructure projects, and activating public spaces for cultural purposes.

While municipal support for new and improved arts spaces was a lower priority for survey respondents, over the long-term, investment in new infrastructure to support growth may be required. The City also needs to take care of its current assets including facilities and public art. Given the significant costs generally associated with physical infrastructure, the City should explore developing a sustainable funding strategy. This should include a variety of options that leverage other funding sources such as developer contributions associated with growth, public-private partnerships and grants from the provincial and federal governments.

## **DIRECTION #5: CONNECT PEOPLE AND PLACES**

**To connect more people with culture in Abbotsford, the City might consider a model to distribute art and creative placemaking across Abbotsford, increasing the range of available creative spaces for production, display, enjoyment and participation and ensuring culture spaces are affordable, accessible and inclusive.**

Abbotsford benefits from a variety of parks, open spaces and civic facilities, all of which could be activated for cultural purposes and place making as noted previously. Culture can be a tool for community-building and civic pride, therefore it is beneficial to ensure art and creative place making is available across all neighbourhoods in addition to centralized cultural districts. Doing so can support spontaneous creativity while providing spaces for temporary culture programs and services.

Providing more localized cultural spaces and programming can certainly make culture more accessible and affordable, which was the second highest priority for municipal funding according to the public survey. The social benefits of culture are vast and it is worthwhile to ensure culture spaces and activities are accessible and barrier-free. Planning for and providing spaces for culture activities through Neighbourhood and Park Planning processes could be a way to achieve this.

The Stage One Report also highlighted the apparent lack of available artist spaces for production and creation. Without sufficient and affordable artist and creative production spaces, Abbotsford risks losing artists to other communities. The University of the Fraser Valley's School of Creative Arts produces fine arts graduates every year that the City could attract and retain given the appropriate sectoral support.

It is important the City engage further with culture professionals to better understand the impacts current City policies and regulations have on artists' ability to access space. This could then support the City exploring tools that address space needs from a regulatory perspective such as zoning and bylaw amendments, tax incentives or subsidies and developer incentives that increase the availability of live/work studio spaces. Furthermore, identifying and protecting existing spaces would ensure artists and other creatives can live and work in Abbotsford.

Technology is also likely to play an increasingly important role in making culture accessible, as more activities become available through digital formats.

Using technology to connect residents to culture can also make it more affordable for more people, provided that residents have digital access across the city. The City could explore ways to leverage technology to support digital place making and technology-based programming.



*Go Play Outside Artist In Residence, Luke Parry, photographing park users*

## THEME: COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS



Culture can be a medium by which to foster dialogue, enhance inclusion and improve engagement. This theme focuses on ways the City could engage with different demographic groups, celebrate its diversity while enhancing equity and inclusion and fostering a new relationship with Indigenous Governments and Peoples.

### DIRECTION #6: ENGAGE WITH YOUNGER GENERATIONS

**The City could work with partners to develop an engagement strategy to target youth and young people, creating room and roles for youth to share their perspectives and experiences, and leveraging culture as tool for positive youth development.**

Abbotsford is a young City with a median age of 39, which presents opportunities to develop and design culture services that engage and appeal to younger generations. Children, youth and young adults face different barriers and challenges than adults and seniors and therefore require relevant supports and strategies to ensure they can participate in and enjoy the culture programming of their choice.

The needs and interests of this group are dynamic and constantly evolving and designing and delivering appealing programs can therefore be a challenge. One option is to actively and directly involve and engage youth in the planning process for new programs and services. Through City Studio, the City has one way to engage youth in our processes and seek their ideas. However, many other youth are harder to reach, which will require different methods but could include working with the School District and Abbotsford Youth Commission on new ways to connect with youth.

In consultation with the Abbotsford Youth Commission, it was noted that a number of challenges exist with respect to accessing culture. These included transportation, a lack of awareness of programs and lack of opportunities for intercultural connections.

Recognizing these and the many other challenges of young people in Abbotsford, a youth strategy could provide opportunities for youth to access arts and culture with the intent to provide young people with skills, promote cross-cultural relationships, create positive experiences, and build strong connections to their community. A strategy could also identify opportunities for culture and youth service organizations, including schools, to collaborate and work together to meet the ongoing needs of young people across the community.

Abbotsford's younger generations have unique and important perspectives that would be valuable to enhancing, supporting and sustaining culture. These perspectives were shared and heard throughout the engagement process.

It is important that young people have a voice and an opportunity to participate in the civic process. Active participation on committees and City working groups could create greater connection to the community and instill a greater sense of civic pride that would hopefully lead to youth retention in the city.

Youth should also be granted opportunities to share their perspective in the city's cultural organizations. Certainly cultural organizations have a role to play and a responsibility to engage youth in a variety of capacities from volunteers to participation on Boards and advisory committees.

One of the key findings in the Stage One Report was the recognition of gun and gang violence in Abbotsford among the city's large percentage of youth. While the City has many ongoing programs in place to help stem the tide of youth getting involved in gangs, culture too can play a pivotal role to help with this effort. During the engagement process, many youth also noted the challenges they face to learn and integrate with other cultures and ethnicities. Culture should play an important role for all youth in the city, but especially for those that are vulnerable and at risk.

Leveraging culture as a crime prevention and reduction tool could include working with the local school district to provide after school culture programming, and providing and animating safe places for young people to gather, participate and express themselves creatively. These programs could also facilitate dialogue and opportunities for cross-connection amongst diverse youth and ethnic groups.

## **DIRECTION #7: COMMIT TO CREATING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

**Local First Nations and Indigenous People are foundational to Abbotsford's history and future. The City should seek ways to honour their legacies and pursue Truth and Reconciliation to support a new relationship between the City and local Indigenous communities.**

The Matheqwi First Nation, Semá:th First Nation, and Leq'a:mel First Nation are part of the Stó:lō Nation whose people have lived in S'ólh Téméxw, the Fraser Valley, for at least 10,000 years, or time immemorial, and are fundamental to Abbotsford's history and future.

The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report in 2015 has ushered in a new era of reconciliation and engagement with Indigenous peoples and First Nation governments in Canada.

There is a significant opportunity for Abbotsford to address and improve its relationship with local Indigenous people and groups through this Culture Strategy. This would involve actively investing in and improving the City's Indigenous relations and ensuring Indigenous voices and storytelling are included in planning.

Improving the City's relationship with the Matheqwi, Leq'a:mel and Semá:th governments, artists and community members will require a long-term commitment and investment. Developing a meaningful relationship will likely require the City to demonstrate meaningful changes in existing thinking, frameworks and processes.

Much work remains to be done in this regard as evidenced by the City's difficulty in engaging Indigenous people and governments to participate in the development of this Strategy. Recognizing the role Indigenous lands and people have played in forming this community contributes to a sense of belonging and cultural pride for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. There are many actionable steps the City could consider to advance this objective including Indigenous relations training for all City staff and representatives, hiring an Indigenous Relations Manager, upholding Truth and Reconciliation in culture and City planning and regularly acknowledging the traditional ancestral unceded territory in which we reside.

Much of Abbotsford's natural heritage is culturally and spiritually significant to Indigenous people. However, some of Abbotsford's built heritage is representative of colonialism, which places the traditional 'European' experience at the centre of the historical narrative, and can be a continued source of pain for communities affected by the marginalization and violence associated with it. It is critical, therefore, that Indigenous people and artists have an opportunity to tell their stories and be heard. This will likely involve difficult conversations, but could ultimately develop a better understanding of the wrongs and challenges Indigenous people have faced while providing a foundation for reconciliation moving forward. To support this, the City should explore ways to decolonize public spaces and civic facilities. A colonization audit of current facilities and spaces is a new way many municipalities and cultural organizations have approached this process.

As expressed through the community consultation, there is a desire to create more touch points and to build stronger relationships (e.g. Sonny McHalsie's cultural tours) with traditional lands and Indigenous culture.

Indigenous voices and stories create opportunities for the broader public to learn about reconciliation and Abbotsford's heritage from a different perspective. Achieving this objective may involve pursuing opportunities to partner with local Indigenous groups on different cultural initiatives, reducing barriers to Indigenous representation on Council committees and City working groups, and looking for ways to integrate Indigenous culture in programs and planning.

## **DIRECTION #8: PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

**The City should consider ways of celebrating Abbotsford's rich diversity, creating opportunities for cross-connection and dialogue about societal barriers, racism and other community issues and facilitating access and inclusion within culture programming.**

One of the great strengths of Abbotsford is its diversity. This has been expressed by stakeholders, arts and culture leaders, and City staff, and reinforced by the broader community. While diversity and multiculturalism are the 'pillars' of Abbotsford's identity, the City recognizes the ethnic and geographic challenges that exist. Diverse cultures are not always

shared but can be siloed creating what has been referred to as a “community of communities” by many throughout the engagement process. Culture can be a tool to promote diversity, social cohesion and inclusion

Diversity is a complex issue. While it is often referred to in the context of multiculturalism, diversity represents each aspect that make individuals unique including abilities, gender, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity. The community consultation emphasized the need to celebrate all aspects that make Abbotsford’s residents diverse beyond just multiculturalism, such as the growing LGBTQ2+ community. It is important to not only recognize the city’s differences and diversity, but celebrate it.

As noted in the Stage One Report, the City recognizes its diversity and unique demographics and is committed to bridge divides, build relationships and face social obstacles head-on. In recent months, the Black Lives Matter and racial justice movement has had a significant impact, not only in the United States, but in Canada as well and locally in Abbotsford. This movement has led to difficult, but much needed conversations regarding racism, privilege and the systemic barriers that many Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) face in Abbotsford and across the country every day.

The issue of racism and societal barriers was raised in a number of community consultation discussions and remains a concern for many community members



*Black Lives Matter messaging placed at Abbotsford City Hall*

in Abbotsford. Art and culture is often used as a medium to encourage and promote thought-provoking conversations about social issues and the City should consider leveraging culture in this regard.

Promoting the unique and diverse identities that make-up Abbotsford provide important learning opportunities, enhance understanding, encourage civic pride and foster social cohesiveness. Facilitating opportunities for intercultural and interfaith connection and dialogue can also enhance unity and promote healing as individuals and groups are able to relate based on their common interests and shared experiences.

The City could create opportunities for cross-cultural connections and storytelling amongst diverse individuals and groups across the community. This may include supporting cultural exhibits and activities that highlight important community and social issues, leveraging art and culture as a medium for difficult dialogue and discussions and incentivizing arts groups, activities and events that promote and support BIPOC, LGBTQ2+ artists and individuals.

Opportunities to participate and volunteer for City culture committees and working groups also need to be accessible to individuals of all backgrounds. The City should consider reviewing its current processes to fill volunteer positions and reduce barriers to access, especially for those who face systemic barriers including BIPOC individuals.

The community consultation also emphasized the need for inclusivity. Arts and culture should be open and accessible - both intellectually and physically - to a broad range of Abbotsford residents to ensure all residents can access, participate and enjoy culture.

There are several steps the City could take to ensure culture is inclusive and accessible such as supporting a diverse range of amenities and activities for all skill levels, prioritizing civic space allocation for inclusive, diverse and accessible programs and events, and developing an inclusion and accessibility framework for City programming and events.

## THEME: OFFERINGS & AWARENESS



Abbotsford's current cultural scene has much to offer and there is much more to come. This theme focuses on promotion, marketing and communication to improve awareness of cultural offerings and how programs can be enhanced, improved and expanded to meet the needs of the growing community.

### DIRECTION #9: COMMUNICATE ALL ABBOTSFORD HAS TO OFFER

**The City must assess how it is currently communicating arts and cultural activities to determine best approaches. Developing a marketing and outreach framework, facilitating and encouraging collaboration, and exploring the creation of a centralized portal to promote culture activities and events can build the profile of current offerings across Abbotsford.**

One of the most significant finding throughout the consultation process was the lack of awareness of the various cultural offerings available within Abbotsford. This emphasized the need for a robust marketing and outreach framework to support enhanced advertising for cultural events, facilities and services.

While overall satisfaction with current cultural offerings was lower according to the survey, the high degree of neutral responses indicate the issue could also be related to awareness and not just the diversity of activities available locally.

The vast majority of engagement participants also identified a lack of awareness as the primary reason many residents did not participate in cultural activities in Abbotsford. Promoting and showcasing all of the cultural opportunities available within Abbotsford could improve residents' satisfaction and encourage them to stay and spend locally.

During discussions with local youth it was noted that for first-generation Canadian youth, language barriers

amongst family members leads to fear of programs and events advertised online. This could be avoided if events and programs were promoted through trusted City-run platforms.

Abbotsford residents access information in many different ways and through many digital and non-digital platforms depending on age, language, socioeconomics and other factors. There were a number of barriers identified in this regard, including language barriers, gaps in social-media based advertising and lack of cross-cultural marketing and advertising. For example, many cultural events occur without awareness of outside groups as they are often only advertised within specific communities. Furthermore, many events and festivals in Abbotsford are planned at the grassroots level and a lack of social media knowledge and expertise can limit the marketing reach of organizers.

In addition, many noted the lack of signage and visibility of art, amenities and cultural facilities within Abbotsford. This also signals the need for a robust and comprehensive culture marketing and communications framework to enhance the promotion of local cultural offerings. This may require the City assessing its current communication channels for their effectiveness and appropriateness based on the intended audiences, exploring the possibility of marketing offerings in multiple languages and improving signage and wayfinding to showcase cultural amenities across the City.

While the City has a number of avenues by which to promote cultural offerings, such as the Parks, Recreation and Culture program guide and its social media channels and website, there are a number of other organizations across Abbotsford who have equally broad reach through their communication channels. Increasing awareness and reducing barriers will require a joint effort between the City and its partners and strong coordination would be beneficial. Greater collaboration and coordination could also reduce duplication, overlap and competition between events and activities as more organizers would be aware of the various offerings planned at any given time. Improving communication through collaboration could be supported by potentially facilitating a cultural planners network and exploring the creation of arts and culture events portal for digital and non-digital advertising and marketing.

## DIRECTION #10: BUILD NEW AUDIENCES

**The City might consider a number of steps to reduce perceived barriers to culture to engage new and different audiences. These measures could include animating community spaces with quality and accessible public art, developing a framework that supports culture programming from novice to expert and nurturing curiosity and creativity through of localized programming with community and social service groups and organizations.**

There are a variety of cultural offerings in Abbotsford that serve wide and diverse audiences. However, there are still opportunities to broaden the reach of these offerings to appeal to new and different audiences. Many residents, however feel that arts and culture are “out-of-reach” or “not-for-them”. Many engagement participants remarked they “couldn’t fully contribute” or participate because they don’t “understand arts or culture”, not realizing that the full spectrum of resources that make-up the arts and culture ecosystem.

Public art can be an easy way to expose the broader public to culture. It is one of the most accessible forms of culture, providing access in free spaces such as parks, plazas, transit hubs, community centres and gardens. It not only animates spaces, it can also change the way people experience them. The need to invest in more public art was also identified through the community engagement process.

To increase public art in the city, the municipality may want to consider expanding its current public art policy to include other civic infrastructure projects such as parks, leveraging developer contributions to fund public art and improving and investing in the maintenance of its current public artworks.

While many consider culture to be separate from traditional ‘recreation’, the two are in fact closely linked. Recreation activities that have a cultural focus play an important role in personal development and are often the first exposure to the arts for many individuals. It is important to recognize and foster the connection between ‘cultural recreation’ and ‘professional arts and culture’.

As an essential social service, libraries can also play an important role in the delivery of cultural services.

They provide barrier-free access to knowledge, literature, and technology and serve as community hubs where everyone can learn, create content, borrow instruments, listen to music and visit museums, heritage sites and collections from around the world online. It is well documented that exposure to and participation in culture activities brings many social, physical and mental benefits, therefore it is crucial that individuals have opportunities to experience culture throughout their lives, be it for recreational or professional purposes.

The City could consider developing a framework that supports a variety of culture programming that appeals to all skill levels from beginner to expert. A good model to follow could be based on the \*Canadian Sport for Life model, which promotes lifelong participation in sports and physical activity. This could also involve recognizing and elevating the role of libraries in culture service delivery and expanding cultural programming offered in the City’s recreation and community centres.

Supporting and providing localized culture programming can provide a successful means of nurturing cultural curiosity and creativity. As previously mentioned, ensuring residents have access to culture spaces near their neighbourhood can reduce barriers and increase access.

How these spaces are activated through programming is equally as important. Spontaneous or planned programming that is interesting, personal or experiential can bring culture to new places and people that may not otherwise have engaged or participated. This was evidenced by the City’s ‘Go Play Outside’ pilot initiative that was launched over the summer of 2020 to encourage residents to stay active, engaged and safe in local parks during the ongoing pandemic. In addition to recreation activities, City staff offered a number of culture activities including an Art Kit designed by The Reach Gallery Museum and an Artist-in-Residence, in partnership with the Abbotsford Arts Council, who documented park goers through the medium of photography. This programming was incredibly well received by the community and engaged a number of individuals in culture through a different means.

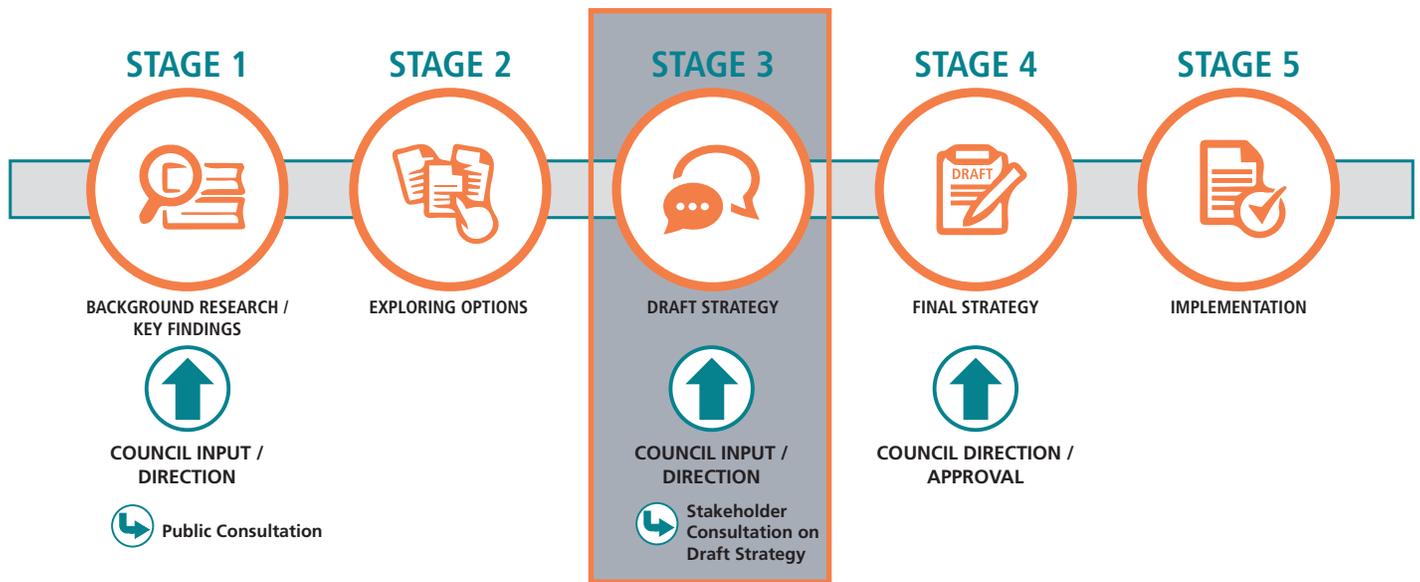
Building on initiatives like this could enable the City to support and nurture cultural curiosity and creativity.

\* Canadian Sport for Life Model: Active For Life: Durable by Design <https://sportforlife.ca/portfolio-view/active-for-life-durable-by-design/>

# CHAPTER 5: NEXT STEPS

The endorsement of this report by Council will conclude Stage Two and launch Stage Three. The preliminary Strategic Directions discussed in this report, along with Council’s input and feedback will be used to develop a Draft Strategy over the coming months. The Draft Strategy will be shared with Council and the public for further consultation before the Final version is shared for Council’s consideration and approval.

## PROJECT STATUS: CULTURE STRATEGY





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# City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan

## Focus Group Summary Report

### Appendix A

November 2019

## 1. Introduction

This summary report highlights the key themes explored during discussions amongst stakeholders on September 17th and 18th, 2019. This report will inform directions and options to be presented to Council on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

On September 17th and 18th 2019, the City of Abbotsford engaged Nordicity, in partnership with Lord Cultural Resources, to conduct three focus group sessions with external key stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of the state of arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford, as well as the opportunities and challenges currently facing the sector. This document is a summary of transcribed notes taken as part of the focus groups, including what means exist to overcome sector challenges as the City develops its Culture Strategic Plan.

## 2. Current Strengths

Current strengths identified in key stakeholder focus groups listed below echo many of the other internal key findings on strengths, which can be found in the State of Culture Report.

### Diversity

The City of Abbotsford is rich in diversity. Key stakeholders expressed the following regarding Abbotsford's strength in diversity, as well as strengths of the community in general:

- Multiculturalism and diversity
- Rich history
- Passionate people
- Community partnerships e.g. Tanglebank, High St.
- Artistic resilience
- Will to grow and to change
- Local Indigenous communities

### Community Facilities

Abbotsford has a number of existing facilities that are currently used or could be used for the development of arts, culture and heritage, providing opportunities for arts and culture education, such as theatre for adults and children, including:

- Three established theatre companies e.g. Fraser Valley Stage, Children's Theatre, Gallery 7 Theatre
- Galleries e.g. The Reach, Kariton Art Gallery, etc.
- Abbotsford Arts Centre
- Matsqui Centennial Auditorium
- UFV
- Churches
- Mamele'awt Community Indigenous Centre

### Natural Heritage

Many participants noted natural heritage as a key strength within arts and culture in Abbotsford.

The following was noted in discussion around natural heritage:

- Walking tours (current or potential) e.g. Art Walk, Clayburn Village, Indigenous traditional plant use walking tour
- “Green culture” and “found spaces” were themes that participants resonated with
- A strong family attendance at **outdoor events**, signifying their success and accessibility
- The use of parks for arts and culture, particularly for festivals and performances e.g. Symphony in the Park
- Embracing Abbotsford’s history of agriculture through outdoor events e.g. Agrifair, Jam in Jubilee, Berry Fest, craft beer culture

In addition to the strengths noted above, participants highlighted the strength of embracing, celebrating and blending “old and new” forms of art, culture and heritage. Lastly, participants noted improved coordination in terms of management of arts and culture within the last four years.

### 3. Key Challenges

#### Cultural and Community Divisiveness

Community divisiveness in Abbotsford impacts its ability to celebrate and develop its multifaceted cultural identity. Silos within the artistic community, ethnic and religious communities were all key considerations in discussions amongst and with participants.

- **Artistic silos:** these were described as silos created within the artistic community, particularly affecting fringe artists who hope to share different forms of art. Resistance met by such artists is typically a result in **social conservatism**, leaving some art on the margins.
- **Community divide:** as also noted in the State of Culture Report, the so-called **East/West Divide** - a geographic and, as noted at times, cultural division - remains a challenge for arts and culture. This also means that **private events** celebrating a community’s culture are typically private, and not necessarily open to the wider community. An added challenge is that although there is a desire to **break down cultural barriers** and **share cultures**, this should not simply develop into **performances of one’s culture** (i.e. traditional dance).
- **Lack of engagement with Indigenous groups:** moving beyond “Indigenous tokenism” is required in order to foster the recognition acceptance, and knowledge of the Indigenous communities that contribute to the cultural uniqueness and sustainability of Abbotsford. Both past and present cultural appropriation must be addressed throughout this process.

#### Lack of Marketing and Awareness

With comments that Abbotsford residents often “go elsewhere for culture” indicates that the wider Abbotsford community lacks awareness of opportunities for consuming, engaging in, and producing arts, culture and heritage assets, due in part to a lack of cohesive and accessible marketing to residents.

- **Lack of marketing:** participants cited a lack of marketing strategy regarding arts, culture and heritage. Independent artists find it difficult to **find audiences** and access **adequate marketing support** and opportunity both through printed and online mediums. There is a **lack of touch points** in marketing arts, culture and heritage, so residents and visitors do not have one place to access information to all arts and cultural events. The **PRC Program Guide** does not provide adequate space for marketing arts, culture and heritage, with one participant noting that it is only given two pages out of a 100-page guide.
- **Lack of awareness:** both within education systems and daily life, there is a **lack of education** regarding culture and performing arts, resulting in a lack of awareness. People

leave Abbotsford to consume culture, as people believe that there is little opportunity in Abbotsford. A **lack of heritage signage**, a “**small town attitude**” and lasting **perceptions of Abbotsford’s culture scene** all contribute to lack of awareness.

#### **Lack of Funding and Municipal Support**

- **Red tape and roadblocks:** bureaucracy appears to be a source of frustration for those within the arts, culture and heritage sector. **Restrictions** on access to booking performance spaces, for example, contribute to the **lack of cultural inventory** in Abbotsford.
- **Funding below industry standard:** the **sector is underfunded** and relies on in kind support and as such cannot develop as much as Recreation and Parks, as fewer funds are dedicated to supporting the arts, culture and heritage, highlighting a **historic lack of City support for cultural initiatives**.
- **Lack of continuity at municipal level:** in tandem with lack of funding and support is a **lack of continuity** between staff changes at the City. Participants identified that turnover of staff at the City contributes to the **lack of accountability** for carrying out plans, particularly within underfunded sectors such as arts, culture and heritage. This, combined with a lack of funding, has created a belief within the arts community that the City “wouldn’t do what they promised they would do.”
- **Lack of representation at PRC Advisory Committee:** participants noted that there is only one representative of arts, culture and heritage within the Advisory Committee, and that this individual is selected from one of three cultural organizations.

#### **Lack of / Mismanagement of Space**

- Participants cited a **lack of space for culture**, particularly in terms of **performance spaces, smaller venues, artistic studios** and **workshop space**. Though physical space is not an issue in some cases, the **spaces can be unwelcoming** to some. This is the case for church spaces, where space can be rented and is available for use, but where certain expressions of art and culture cannot necessarily be expressed freely.

#### **Lack of Youth Participation**

- A lack of resources within education have led to constraints for **youth to build culture**. According to participants, the **school district does not support culture** in Abbotsford, despite being a consumer of it. Participants also cited a **lack of grounding** for youth, **lack of activities** for youth in the area, and that **teachers are confined to curriculum relevance** in their classrooms.

## **4. Proposed Means to Overcome Challenges**

In addressing these challenges, participants were asked to discuss what means could overcome the challenges identified above. The following section outlines solutions and suggestions expressed by participants:

#### **Access and Education**

- Education around arts, culture and heritage was identified as key to fostering Abbotsford’s unique culture. Participants noted the equal importance of both **early education on culture** and **cooperation between levels of education**, from primary to post-secondary institutions. Supporting **youth-led initiatives** could address the lack of youth engagement in arts, culture and heritage, as well as encourage integration and sharing of cultures among youth.

- **Access** to arts, culture and heritage was a key component of discussion amongst participants, who cited a need for **more public art** as well as **information workshops** for residents.

### Marketing and Awareness

- To address lack of cohesion in the marketing of arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford, participants suggest the **centralization of culture marketing**, taking form through a **City-wide calendar**, a **strong social media platform**, and more presence of culture on the City website. While **digital promotion** is increasingly important, some participants noted the value of printouts, brochures and guides, particularly for seniors or individuals without easy online access. Participants also noted that community journalism should be reflective of local culture, and that this needs to be a priority in marketing of culture. **Local specificity**, found in markets and other community events, can be leveraged through culture.
- Abbotsford's rich history ought to be shared with both residents and visitors. **Awareness of such cultural and heritage assets** could be increased through **signage**, e.g. Clayburn Village or art walks around the city.

### Direct Support and Funding from City

Participants unanimously agreed that there is a **disconnect between service providers of culture and the institution of City Hall**. Participants noted the two kinds of support they need most in order to develop arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford:

- **Direct Funding:** there is a need for **more grants for all sizes of cultural events**, with participants noting the **value of micro-grants** for youth and independent artists. There also needs to be more **sustainability in budgeting** of cultural spending, allowing for a longer-term approach and **investment in cultural infrastructure** e.g., performance venues.
- **Direct Support:** alongside increased funding, the City should consider culture to be as important as recreation and parks. This kind of support could include **simplifying rental policy processes for repeat venue renters** and offering **more opportunities for facilitated conversation** between the arts and culture community and the City. **Supporting fringe and local artists**, as the City supports local businesses and organizations in other sectors, would foster Abbotsford's unique cultural identity. Most important to participants was a need for **more representation within the PRC Advisory Committee**. This would also help to build in accountability mechanisms to ensure funding is going to the arts and culture community.

### More Space and Events

- Increasing the availability of space for arts, culture and heritage activities is key to developing the sector in Abbotsford, so that it can be as accessible to residents as parks and recreation spaces. This could be done by encouraging the use of **non-traditional spaces** and creating **cultural spaces for youth the gather**. **Affordability of space** is a key consideration, particularly for youth and independent artists. Participants noted, however, that while developing culture in unexpected and non-traditional spaces is "great", this should be done without compromising investment in much-needed physical infrastructure to strengthen arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford.

### Wayfinding and Experience

- As part of increasing awareness and educating on the value of culture, participants noted a need for more wayfinding and opportunities for cultural experiences within Abbotsford. Creating a more **walkable city**, introducing more **bike lanes**, and **widening transit options**, and a **“culture bus”** to and from festivals/events all contribute to creating a culturally vibrant city. While participants recognized that these projects take time and financing, they think including cultural considerations in such plans would be beneficial both economically and socially.

### Cultural Integration

- Discussion on overcoming cultural and community divisiveness dominated the conversation amongst and with participants. They indicated the needed for **clear action to address the issue of division** in Abbotsford- through recognizing, embracing, integrating, and celebrating cultural diversity. This would include actively working to increase **access to private cultural events**, enabling a sharing of cultures and **breaking down long-standing silos**.
- Participants expressed a desire for more **opportunities for language and cultural exchange**, between demographic and ethnic groups, through the sharing of food, music, dance and other identifying features of culture. A **recognition and celebration of subcultures**<sup>1</sup> is also key to increasing awareness and sharing of cultures, including the celebration of the LGBTQ2 community. Finally, enabling more physical and cultural integration of communities through the arts would encourage a sense of shared heritage in Abbotsford.

### FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Participants that took part in this external stakeholders Focus Group identified themselves as members of the following organizations, although may have been responding from personal perspective, rather than an organizational stance.

Aboriginal Arts and Culture Events - Abbotsford Arts Council -Abbotsford Children's Theatre  
Abbotsford Community Foundation -Abbotsford Downtown Business Association - Agrifair -  
Abbotsford School District #34 -Abbotsford Youth Commission- Archway Community Services  
CIVL- Clayburn Village Community Society -Fraser Valley Orchestra - Fraser Valley Regional  
Library - Fraser Valley Stage -Gallery 7- Gurmat Centre -Heritage Abbotsford Society - HOFA  
Matsqui OAP 69 - Raspberry Magazine -The Reach Gallery Museum - Tourism Abbotsford  
Tradex -University of Fraser Valley

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<sup>1</sup> Participants identified different and distinct subcultures, such as craft beer culture and cannabis culture.

# City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan Survey Summary Report

## Appendix B

September 2020

## Executive Summary

As part of the research and engagement phase of the City of Abbotsford's Culture Strategic Plan, a public survey was conducted from April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 to July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 via the *Bang the Table Engagement* survey platform. Approximately 900 responses were gathered, helping to inform priority setting for the Strategic Plan. While this executive summary serves to paint a picture of Abbotsford's cultural identity, needs, and priorities, it is not intended to fully capture the demographic makeup of Abbotsford, nor does it capture all needs, challenges and strengths within Abbotsford's arts, culture and heritage community. As such, the survey results are complementary to public focus groups, key stakeholder roundtables, public engagement activities and secondary research which, combined, are shaping the Strategic Plan.

Of all respondents, the largest proportion (25.7%) were between 25-36 years of age. Most respondents identified as female (67%), with the largest proportion of respondents having gained a bachelor's degree (25.1%). Respondents to the survey identified primarily as North American (32.6%), Eastern European (18.2%) and South Asian (12.2%). The most common household income average for respondents was between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Respondents also reflected a diverse range of neighbourhoods within Abbotsford.

Respondents noted that their primary engagement with culture involves **attending and/or participating in cultural events, programs and/or classes**. Primary sources of information on arts, culture, and heritage in Abbotsford included the Abbotsford Newspaper, word of mouth within the community, and external social media. Most popular cultural assets identified or frequented by respondents included The Reach Gallery Museum, the Abbotsford Centre, and the Abbotsford Arts Centre, followed by culturally significant spaces such as Clayburn Village Historic Conservation Area and the Gur Sikh Temple and Sikh Heritage Museum.

Cultural experiences noted as most frequently sought out by respondents included going to the movies (cinema), visiting markets, live music events, and public gardens. The most **notable cultural events** identified by respondents were Canada Day and the Abbotsford Berry Festival, followed by the Mill Lake Concert Series and Jam in Jubilee. It was found that **most households (66%) spend less than \$50 per month on cultural activities** within Abbotsford. It was also noted that **lack of awareness** is the most significant challenge to accessing arts and culture in the City, which was highlighted further in additional comments by respondents.

"I think that culture can be a win/win scenario that benefits individuals, the city, and is also good for the economy. Quality of life is important to everyone and culture is a prime component of that." – Survey Respondent

Respondents largely shared that the City should prioritize **more free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)** in developing the Culture Strategic Plan. As a means to implement this priority, respondents would recommend more **social media-based advertising**. There was also overwhelming agreement that the primary positive impact of culture in Abbotsford is that **"it brings people together."**

Finally, respondents were provided the opportunity to share openly about what they think the City should consider or what could have been missed in the survey questions. Live theatre was noted as a community priority, particularly as there is a **growing theatre community**. Highlighting and **honouring First Nations**, as well as **inclusion of all age groups**, were also noted as important priorities. **Supporting work of local organizations**, such as The Reach Gallery, were also highlighted as key components of a successful Culture Strategic Plan.

## 1.1 Demographic Information

The survey was completed by a wide range of age groups. Of all respondents, the largest proportion (25.7%) were between 25-36 years of age, followed by those aged 37-49 (24%) and 50-65 (23%). Most respondents identified as female (67.5%), compared to 29% male respondents. 1.6% of respondents identified as gender nonconforming. The survey also inquired about level of education. The results were mixed, with the largest proportion of respondents having gained a bachelor's degree (25.1%). The second largest proportion of respondents (21.4%) had attained some college credit but no degree. Other representative groups involved a high school diploma or the equivalent (16.2%), and trade/technical/vocational training (11.5%). Given Abbotsford's hyper-diverse community, the survey also sought information on ethnic origin and background. Respondents to the survey identified primarily as North American (32.6%), Eastern European (18.2%) and South Asian (12.2%). Of all respondents, 10% identified as Indigenous. This variety of education background and ethnic origin is indicative of a diverse group of respondents, all of which have unique perspectives on art, culture, and heritage in Abbotsford.

### Household Income and Spending on Culture

Respondents were also asked to provide their annual household income, as well as their estimated household spending on culture within and outside of Abbotsford. While not indicative of Abbotsford as a whole, information on estimated annual income provides some insight into capacity to participate in culture in the city. The most common household income average for respondents was between \$50,000 and \$100,000. A significant portion of respondents chose not to share their annual household income, so this should be considered as less reliable data than official census data.

Respondents also provided an estimate of how much their family unit spends on arts, culture or heritage activities per month in and outside Abbotsford. Within the city, **most households (66%) spend less than \$50 per month on cultural activities** within Abbotsford (28% spend between \$25-\$50, and 38% spend less than \$25). Almost half of respondents also indicated that within that estimated spending on culture, between 0-25% of that spending is outside of Abbotsford.

### Abbotsford and Neighbouring Municipalities

Given that Abbotsford exists not in a silo but nestled between neighbouring cities, respondents living outside Abbotsford were also welcomed to respond to the survey. However, 88% of respondents indicated that they lived within the city, meaning that survey results are largely representative of Abbotsford's unique community. The remaining 12% of respondents who live outside the city indicated that they lived in Mission (32%), Chilliwack (25%), Langley (25%) and Maple Ridge (16%). Respondents living within Abbotsford reflected a diverse range of neighbourhoods. Of 22 neighbourhoods represented through survey respondents, Clearbrook (12.7%) and City Centre (12.2%) were most represented.

## 1.2 Engagement with Culture

Respondents noted that their primary engagement with culture involves **attending and/or participating in cultural events, programs and/or classes**. Other options for answers included volunteering in the cultural sector, working in the cultural sector, representation of non-arts, culture or heritage specific not-for-profit organizations, working for the City of Abbotsford, and none of the above. After 'attending and/or participating in cultural events, programs and/or classes', the second largest proportion of responses was 'none of the above.' This finding may indicate a lack of engagement with culture amongst respondents, or perhaps more likely, that the available responses did not adequately encompass or reflect their engagement with culture.

## Satisfaction with Cultural Offerings

In order to gauge respondent's feelings towards current arts, culture and heritage services offered by the City of Abbotsford, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with current offerings. Results were mixed, with 44% responding as 'neutral', and 29% responding as 'satisfied'. 16.5% indicated being 'dissatisfied', while less than 4% were 'very dissatisfied'. This question was asked primarily as a benchmark against future polling of satisfaction.

## Primary Sources of Information on Culture

Respondents were asked to indicate how they typically find out about arts events, activities, and amenities in Abbotsford. **Word of mouth, external social media, and the Abbotsford Newspaper** (in that order) were the most popular sources of information. City-led social media and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Guide, though less popular than the aforementioned sources, were still significant. Least popular sources included the radio and other websites. Posters and signs were mentioned by some participants, while a small group noted that they feel they do not hear enough news about cultural events or offerings, despite wanting to find out. These findings may indicate that while leveraging word of mouth, social media, and the newspaper as strong sources of information, these mediums may not be reaching all demographic groups hoping to engage in culture in Abbotsford.

### 1.2.1 Cultural Places, Experiences and Events/Festivals

Respondents were asked to note cultural venues or places, experiences and events that are most notable to them in the context of Abbotsford's culture. Most **notable cultural 'places'** identified or frequented by respondents included **The Reach Gallery Museum, the Abbotsford Centre, and the Abbotsford Arts Centre**, followed by culturally significant spaces such as Clayburn Village Historic Conservation Area and the Gur Sikh Temple and Sikh Heritage Museum. Gallery 7 was also noted by participants as a source of information, as well as grassroots organizations and various departments at the University of the Fraser Valley.

**Cultural experiences** noted as most frequently sought out by respondents included going to the **movies (cinema), visiting markets, listening to live music, and visiting public gardens**. Less popular, but also indicated by a significant portion of respondents, was an interest in wineries and craft breweries, as well as attending live theatre performances. Other responses included multicultural day offerings, attending comedy events, and walking the Discovery Trail. These various choices indicate a wide variety of definitions of culture within the city, with a desire for locally operated experiences.

"Investment in art spaces, facilities, education, programming, festivals, public art and infrastructure is an **insurance policy for a healthy community.**" – *Survey Respondent*

The most **notable cultural events** identified by respondents were **Canada Day** and the **Abbotsford Berry Festival**. The **Mill Lake Concert Series** and **Jam in Jubilee** were also noted by a number of participants, but Canada Day and Abbotsford Berry Festival were almost twice as popular. Other responses include the Sikh Parade, Agrifair, the Abbotsford Air Show and Pride.

## 1.3 Identification of Challenges and Priority Setting

Respondents were invited to share some challenges, means of overcoming such challenges, and priority areas for cultural planning in Abbotsford.

## Overall, **lack of awareness** is the most significant challenge to accessing arts and culture in the City.

Lack of awareness was also highlighted further in additional comments by respondents. This sentiment echoes much of what has already been found through focus groups and Host Your Own engagement reports. Second to awareness was a **lack of variety/quality** within cultural offerings and programming, followed by **scheduling conflicts**. Lack of performance venues to produce work, accessibility/mobility issues were cited as some other challenges by respondents. These identified challenges highlight that cultural offerings may not be meeting the diverse needs of the community, and that often these are inaccessible due to the time during which they take place.

### Priorities for Arts, Culture and Heritage

Respondents largely shared that the City should prioritize **more free and accessible public events** (e.g. festivals) in developing the Culture Strategic Plan. While this priority was the overwhelming choice for most participants, there was an even distribution of priorities such as ensuring inclusivity and accessibility, and activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups. The need for a **cultural facility** suited for a growing population was also cited as a key priority.

As a means to implement these priorities, namely more free and accessible public events, respondents would recommend more **social media-based advertising**. Visible signage (e.g. for heritage sites or art walks) and increasing awareness of a centralized online website beyond the Parks, Recreation and Culture guide. Though social media and signage may increase awareness of cultural offerings, respondents noted the need for **adequate and sustained funding** for the arts and cultural sectors.

## There is an overwhelming agreement that the primary **positive impact of culture in Abbotsford is that “it brings people together”**.

Above bringing people together, the majority of respondents also noted that culture makes Abbotsford more vibrant – reflecting the desire and need for a diversity of programming, offerings, and representation of Abbotsford’s many artistic, cultural, and historic features that make it unique.

### 1.4 Additional Comments

Finally, respondents were provided the opportunity to share openly about what they think the City should consider or what could have been missed in the survey questions.

While the comments were generally positive, some respondents expressed concern that the **scope of what defines culture was too narrow** within the survey, and not representative of Abbotsford’s diverse cultural community. It was also noted that **red tape mandated by bureaucratic processes** makes community events more difficult. A need for cultural infrastructure was noted several times, including the need for a **black box theatre** and a **permanent outdoor performance venue**. However, there is also a recognition that the Cultural Strategic Plan is a good first step in addressing some of the needs and challenges within the sector locally.

“Continue getting the word out about the culture within Abbotsford in a clear voice that gets people's attention. Keep up the efforts you are making!” – *Survey Respondent*

Despite these mixed comments, there was a general agreement that incremental changes, focus on inclusiveness and diversity of artistic and cultural expressions, will all lead to a vibrant cultural community in Abbotsford. Engagement of youth as well as seniors is seen as a key priority and need.

Live theatre was noted as a community priority, particularly as there is a growing theatre community. **Honouring First Nations peoples and history** was noted several times as a must-have within long-term cultural planning, including raising awareness of Indigenous-led offerings, such as UFV's S'eliyemetaxwtxw Art Gallery. There is also a desire for Indigenous culture to be shared more widely with the community, for example, through "two-spirited dances for all peoples".

Inclusion of all age groups within diverse ethnic groups, and **highlighting community-led achievements** (of the Sikh community<sup>1</sup>, for example) were also noted as important priorities. Continued support for the work of local organizations, including the **Abbotsford Arts Council** and **The Reach Gallery**, were also highlighted as key components of a successful Culture Strategic Plan. Overall, survey respondents hope to see growth of culture in Abbotsford, with a recognition of the work that must continue for this to successfully occur.

Other key threads noted throughout comments included the following:

- On top of culture being tied to healthy communities, the complementary nature of **investment in the arts for economic development** should be highlighted – there is a clear rationale for supporting the arts, culture, and heritage as a contributor to economic growth.
- There is a need for residents to **experience each other's specific cultures** – "It would be good to have it in such a way that it is for everyone to experience vs. a specific cultural event for that specific culture only."
- A **gap exists for young adults** within cultural offerings, with respondents noting a greater focus on children and families than youth and young adults seeking out new, exciting offerings. For example, leveraging craft beer culture by facilitating beer gardens and local and live music performances, are more keenly desired by this age group than parks or gardens.
- There is a need to **ensure accessibility** of cultural offerings to those with specific needs, e.g. the elderly who may not be able to travel to and from events late at night in winter months.
- Events and offerings such as Jam in Jubilee, the Farmers' Market, Rail District events, and Circle Farm Tour programs are popular with residents, who would like to see more of these events and offerings that speak to **Abbotsford's unique culture and agricultural identity**.
- **Continued consultation and engagement with the arts and culture community** as the Strategic Plan is developed will be imperative to its success and adequate reflection of the work these organizations are doing within the sector.

"I think this is a great opportunity to see the City's plan and provide feedback!

Arts and culture in Abbotsford have been improving significantly in recent years and with this proactive approach will continue to get better!

We have so many creative people and groups in our city and I would far prefer to be a patron of local arts and culture than have to leave Abbotsford for this type of activities." – *Survey Respondent*

# **City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan**

## **Public Focus Group Summary Report Appendix C**

July 2020

## 1. Introduction

This summary report highlights the key themes explored during discussions amongst participants of public workshops on February 25<sup>th</sup>, March 4<sup>th</sup>, March 9<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.<sup>1</sup> This report will inform directions and options to be considered during the development of the Culture Strategic Plan for the City of Abbotsford.

The City of Abbotsford engaged Nordicity to conduct five workshop sessions with the public in order to provide to participants a summary of the state of arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford to date, to discuss challenges currently facing the sector through a series of interactive activities, and to develop solutions and direction for the Culture Strategic Plan. This document is a summary of notes taken as part of the focus groups, as well as data collected through the Dotmocracy exercise and Cultural Mapping Exercise. This document also summarizes what feedback was given regarding the State of Culture report, and what culture means to the public in Abbotsford, reflecting perspectives from a broad range of residents.

The public focus groups were just one way for the public to participate in the Culture Strategic Plan. The public can also have their say by responding to the online survey, conducting a “Host Your Own” community engagement session, and responding to the online poll, “What Does Culture Mean to You?”. Combined, the Project Team and the City will have heard from City staff, key stakeholders and the public respectively, offering a more holistic and representative picture of what priorities should be set within the Culture Strategic Plan.

It is also important to note that two of these public focus groups occurred during COVID-19, during which the Nordicity team used interactive activities and discussion carried out via the online Zoom platform. These discussions were especially fruitful and indicative of the resilience of Abbotsford’s community during difficult circumstances. In discussing these challenges, one participant highlighted the unique importance of culture, stating “*What do you have when you have lost everything? Culture.*”

### 1.1 Key Findings

From these focus groups, key findings are as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- The State of Culture report is not fully representative of Abbotsford’s cultural offerings unique needs and identity and requires deeper thought on wider definitions of culture in the City.
- Abbotsford’s cultural/artist community is concerned that the City is not investing in needed purpose-built spaces for arts and culture, and may be relying too much on existing, multipurpose facilities as well as the concept of *found spaces*.
- Despite the emphasis on *diversity* and *multiculturalism* as a pillar of Abbotsford’s identity, ethnic and geographical (East vs West) divides continue to exacerbate the various siloes that exist within the community. Abbotsford was often referred to as a “community of communities”, bringing to the forefront existing geographical and cultural divides.

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<sup>1</sup> Public focus groups held on May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup> took place online using Zoom and a number of real-time digital engagement techniques. Nordicity’s understanding is that more public focus groups may take place, either digitally or in person, in coming months. This will depend on the City’s capacity and protocol amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing physical distancing orders by the Provincial and Federal government.

<sup>2</sup> This summary of findings is based on feedback received from the five focus groups, and does not represent the totality of findings from research so far.

- Lack of awareness of cultural offerings and assets remains a key issue for culture in Abbotsford, further emphasizing a need for a robust outreach program through a centralized or *one-stop-shop* for advertising cultural events, facilities and services, both online and offline.
- There is a keen desire for cultural development to result in the bringing together of diverse communities, and the use of culture as a catalyst for a more vibrant, connected and welcoming Abbotsford.

## 2. What does culture mean to participants?

Below are the word clouds gathered from a number of the sessions. Common themes included **diversity, community, festivals, events, and connecting**. It was noted by one participant that although the term *diversity* often comes up when describing Abbotsford (and thus its culture), this does not mean that diverse cultures are shared, but are instead **siloed** into a “**community of communities**.” The word clouds below reflect live responses from a number of the sessions:

Figure 1: February 25<sup>th</sup>



Figure 2: March 4th



Figure 3: March 9<sup>th</sup>



## 3. Summary of Dotmocracy & Conversation Space

### 3.1 Dotmocracy Activity

The dotmocracy provided an opportunity for participants to indicate what resonated most with them and was followed by a *Conversation Space* that enabled participants to discuss solutions to challenges or barriers faced in relation to accessing arts and culture in Abbotsford. A summary of this discussion can be found in Section 3.2. The dotmocracy questions have also been used in other public engagement activities, and stem from the survey on the *Let's Talk Abbotsford* platform. As such, while the insights below refer only to findings from the public focus groups, this data will be collated to encompass a more robust narrative in later stages of Phase 1.

For the dotmocracy activity, participants were asked to consider the following questions, which were divided on three separate poster boards (or polling questions online) with a list of options below them. Participants were asked to identify a maximum of three answers that resonated most with them. To elaborate on their answer choices, participants during in-person sessions were given the option to write their thoughts on a sticky note next to their three answers on each of the three boards. For online focus group sessions, the Zoom Polling tool was used. Dotmocracy questions and key themes from activity findings are as follows. Transcribed and combined responses can be found in Appendix A and B.

#### 3.1.1 What challenges or barriers have you experienced in accessing arts or culture in Abbotsford, if any?

- **Lack of awareness** – the vast majority of participants identified a lack of awareness as a primary challenge in accessing arts and culture in Abbotsford. Many cultural events occur without awareness of outside groups, indicating a need for more cross-cultural awareness regarding events in Abbotsford. Citing this awareness issue, participants feel that events often focus on one particular culture, while few attract several cultures at once. Poor use of media communication (e.g. social media) could be contributing to this ongoing challenge.
- **Lack of variety/quality** – continued reliance on Vancouver as a cultural centre has resulted in a lack of variety in cultural offerings in Abbotsford.
- **Cost** – there is a keen desire for more free and affordable cultural offerings in Abbotsford, with participants noting that this was often a barrier to lower-income families who are less likely to be able to participate.
- Other issues such as transportation, cost, lack of cohesion and language were noted by some participants – issues which inherently overlap with other departments at the City level.
- Overall, the most prevalent challenge identified is the lack of sharing between cultures, be it through awareness raising, event advertisement or intercultural/interfaith interaction.

#### 3.1.2 What means do you think the City of Abbotsford should use to improve awareness of arts, culture and heritage events?

- **More social media-based advertising** – many participants noted the increasing importance of leveraging social media and the gap that still exists in this space. This would engage youth in arts, cultural and heritage offerings, whilst acting as an online platform for artists, creators and performers.
- **Increase awareness of centralized online website beyond the PRC Guide** – similarly to the need for more social media-based advertising, there is also a need for a *one stop shop* for culture, where residents can see all upcoming cultural offerings through one online platform,

and where organizations can advertise their events. The Municipality of Saanich was noted as a good example.

- **Make signage visible** – clearly marked signage to highlight art, cultural offerings and heritage in Abbotsford were noted by participants not only as a way to increase awareness for residents but also as beneficial to tourism. The City of Kelowna was noted as a good example.
- Participants also noted advertising in the local newspaper and throughout Lower Mainland television networks as key opportunities to improve awareness of arts, culture and heritage events in Abbotsford (e.g. the popular Punjabi newspaper)

### 3.1.3 What do you think the City of Abbotsford should prioritize in developing the Culture Strategic Plan? (e.g. more performance spaces, Indigenous arts programs, focus on youth)

- **More free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)** – with one saying that “art is affluent”, participants that subsidization of cultural events by the City and its partners could make culture more inclusive of low-income families and community members.
- **Ensuring arts and culture-based activities are inclusive and accessible to the broadest range of participants** – participants noted the importance of inclusivity for all, with many noting accessibility for seniors (e.g. through increased public seating). Also noted by participants was the need for **activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups**; echoing a common theme discussed throughout all focus groups, there is a need for intercultural and interfaith interaction, which is important given Abbotsford’s unique population.
- **Increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations** – participants noted that relying on private businesses and corporate sponsorship for funding of arts and cultural programming is not sufficient, and that the sector requires more funding from the City.
- Highlighted the diversity of thought as well as culture in Abbotsford, the range of answers to this question was large. In addition to the most popular priorities above, participants noted the need for **new and improved arts spaces**. The concept of *found spaces* is seen by participants as supplementary to robust and sustainable existing infrastructure for the arts and culture. Improved facilities would both engage the public in more cultural events and foster new, visually impactful expressions of art in the City.
- Other priorities identified by participants included **more Indigenous arts programs** and opportunities, **improved marketing** for greater awareness, and more free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals).

“If the scope of culture is too broad it becomes diluted, and really nothing shines. Specific events...should be more focused so that whatever type of cultural medium they represent can be done richly and done really well.”

Focus Group Participant

## 3.2 Conversation Space – Solutions-Focused Thinking

After participants voted in the dotmocracy exercise, they were invited to discuss in smaller groups the biggest challenges, means to overcome them and future City priorities as part of a solutions-focused *conversation space*. Participants noted the following challenges and suggested solutions. Transcribed and combined responses can be found in Appendix A.

- **Lack of variety/importance of culture**

- Proposed solutions included the creation of a dense food/cultural district (in the downtown area), a concerted City-led effort to preserve heritage, as well as increased frequency and reach of programming of existing organizations (e.g. The Reach Gallery, kids/family-oriented programming, heritage and culinary events in existing spaces). Given a clear lack of investment in public art as compared to other municipalities, participants noted the need for the City to invest in public art.

- **Lack of Digital Advertising**

- Proposed solutions included a one-stop-shop as well as tagged/searchable content through social media hashtags, creating an archive of posts related to certain cultural and arts events throughout the City. This would also help with brand awareness as compared to other towns and municipalities such as Fort Langley, which was noted by participants as a known location for various cultural attractions.

- **Awareness**

- A central calendar (on the City website) as well as physical “What’s Happening” boards in public spaces could increase awareness, from mountain-biking community meetups to cultural/religious festivals. This kind of advertising could be made available in several languages. Greater presence of cultural offerings in online forms of the PRC newsletter, as well as a concerted effort from Tourism and Culture stakeholders to combine forces for a single-source digital advertising platform, could address the lack of digital content available currently. Culture-related billboards, partnerships with the School Board, personalized story-telling and two-way communication with arts organizations were also cited as potential solutions. Tourism Abbotsford was noted several times as a potential key partner in advancing cultural awareness, including becoming more embedded to “promote the depth and range of what actually happens in Abbotsford.”

“Lack of awareness of City’s history/diverse groups/neighborhoods leads to lack of identity with the City. More placemaking will help create civic pride and sense of belonging.”

Focus Group Participant

- **Spaces**

- To address the issue of inadequate or unavailable space for the arts and culture in Abbotsford, the obvious solution is deliberate planning of venues that are suitable for the needs of the City (e.g. it was noted that while a small theatre might be helpful for a short period of time, there is a real need for a large theatre space with a capacity of over 800 people). Asking the sector what they specifically need (e.g. a black box room, or a plaza in historic downtown) could lead to concrete solutions for which to plan.

- **Transportation/Parking**

- Tied closely to city planning and infrastructure considerations, public transportation to and from events (e.g. music festivals) or tangible arts/culture/heritage assets (e.g. community gardens), as well as adequate amounts of parking for those who wish to drive, would attract more residents to participate in arts/culture/heritage-related events and attractions in Abbotsford.

▪ **Accessibility for youth and seniors of all backgrounds**

- With the knowledge that different age groups use different platforms to access information, participants feel this should be reflected in the Cultural Plan. For example, engaging youth via Instagram or TikTok may be most effective, whereas Facebook, local newspapers and the radio may be most effective for adults and seniors.
- **Youth need to be engaged** – participants noted that engaging youth in culture is key to the success of Abbotsford’s Cultural Plan. Many have limited awareness of local cultural offerings and tend to think that they will need to leave Abbotsford in search of new opportunities.
- **Seniors need to be included** – many solutions related to seniors’ access to culture were discussed. Participants would like to see advertisement in more languages to address the ongoing language gap in Abbotsford, particularly for seniors, by advertising in the local newspapers (e.g. the Punjabi newspaper, which many households regularly take home).

“[Rather than] invent new events...re-invest in existing ones. There may be a lot of fun cultural events that could draw in the **youth** to not only stay in our City but to come to the City. Perhaps make those bigger and better. Focus on social media, etc.”

Focus Group Participant

▪ **Creating space and opportunities for Indigenous Art/Programs**

- Throughout discussion, the need to ensure that places and spaces are made for **First Nations to tell their stories** is of utmost importance in Abbotsford. There is a desire to create more touchpoints, to build stronger relationships (e.g. Sonny McHaise’s cultural tours) with traditional lands and Indigenous culture. This would also include collaborating with the School Board on educational programs.

## 4. Summary of Cultural Mapping Activity

The Cultural Mapping activity allowed participants gather around a large-scale geographical map of Abbotsford to think about culture in the framework of *spaces/places*, *events* and *experiences*, delving into both the tangible and intangible aspects of culture. This activity was especially bolstered by the Cultural Resources Framework which helped participants to ponder the vastly diverse definitions of what culture can mean to them, from winery tours to book clubs.

The activity was divided into two parts; first, participants were asked to **identify spaces/places, experiences and events that they already exist** in Abbotsford; second, participants were asked to identify spaces/places, experiences and events that they would like to see in the City. This activity carried out across three focus groups provided key insight into levels of awareness that residents might have about culture in their City, as well as what kind of cultural offerings are still missing in Abbotsford.

The activity culminated in three large, annotated maps, which have been preserved by City staff in and developed into an easily accessible digital map of culture in Abbotsford on the Let's Talk Abbotsford Platform. This online map was used during digital focus group facilitation. The value of this kind of activity was clear, and **many participants noted that they were both pleased and surprised to see how much Abbotsford has to offer**, and that they had not been aware of these offerings before attending the workshop. This affirmation emphasizes not only the opportunities to develop Abbotsford's culture, but also to use culture as a tool for community-building and a sense of pride for residents. Thus far, dozens of pins have been added to the digital map, creating an archive of cultural venues, events and experiences available throughout the City, as well as cultural offerings that residents would like to see in the future. The summary below identifies feedback given from the first three in-person focus groups.

### 4.1 Existing Spaces/Places, Events and Experiences

Of all the categories, existing spaces/places were noted the most by participants. This highlights not only a certain level of awareness about cultural offerings within Abbotsford in the form of tangible spaces/places, but also a keen desire to make those venues known to the public.

Common themes of spaces/places were found across all three focus groups. These included:

- **Spaces where art/theatre is exhibited** e.g. Gallery 7 Theatre, painted art murals located in alleyways of downtown Abbotsford and Abbotsford Children's Theatre.
- **Spaces offering services** e.g. Archway Community Services, places of worship, Clearbrook Library.
- **Spaces of cultural/historical value** e.g. Semeth Longhouse, Mennonite Heritage Museum, Clayburn Village.
- **Natural spaces** e.g. Abby Grind, Mini Mill Lake, culturally modified trees and trails.
- **Food and agricultural venues** e.g. Fieldhouse, Olde Abbey Ales, Raveig Brewing, Circle Farm/Heritage Tours and Ripples Winery.
- A list of **societies and community organizations** also emerged on the map, demonstrating that those involved in arts, culture and heritage have existing ways of connecting with each other.

Participants' identification of experience allowed for a discussion on whether culture necessarily needs to be categorized as an event or a place. Indeed, many participants felt that culture should also be experienced, and were happy to share what they categorized as such. Common themes of experiences identified by participants are as follows:

- Experiences of **natural heritage** e.g. hiking trails at Dawnes Bowl, Eagle Mountain Lookout, McDonald Park Official Astronomy viewing point, unique geology features (caves and waterfalls with First Nations significance) and Abbotsford regional park.
- Experiences of **community development** e.g. Starfish donation program, Arts Council monthly life drawing lessons, environmental stewardship opportunities for local schools and youth groups.

A number of events were identified by participants, including those less known to the public. This non-exhaustive list spurred discussion of how these existing events could bring together diverse communities, and how advertising for these events could be improved through a one stop shop online, the newspaper, and local media channels.

- **Agricultural events** are of great significance in Abbotsford e.g. Tulip Festival, Agrifair, Berry Festival and ADBA Wine Walk.
- **Events of cultural significance** e.g. Diwali, Canada Day, Vaisakini Parade, UFV's hosting of several culturally significant events.
- **Commercial events** e.g. Agrec Flea Market, Tradex RV Show, Tradex Pet Show, MCC Sale and Festival.
- **Musical/Arts Festivals** e.g. Jam in Jubilee and Symphony in the Park.
- Other unique events include neighborhood **garage parties**, **Jane's Walk Abbotsford**, and **Abbotsford International Airshow** were identified.

## 4.2 Desired Spaces/Places, Events and Experiences

Participants were particularly keen to identify where they would like to see more venues, events and cultural experiences in Abbotsford. Having identified existing cultural assets on the map, the following were noted:

### Places/Spaces

- **Performance venues** e.g. a venue for bands to play with good sound, multiple theatre spaces throughout the City, a dedicated and permanent outdoor performance space at Mill Lake and an open plaza in the Downtown area.
- A commitment to preserving and bettering **natural spaces** e.g. a community garden for medicines, better lit paths at Mill Lake and well-built trails.
- More **culinary spaces** e.g. Tuscan Farm gardens, a permanent local food market downtown or a dedicated food and market district for the entire community.
- Revisiting the concept of **found spaces** e.g. uncertainty over the use of Matsqui Auditorium, and the need for more advertisement of events happening there, as well as using the space behind City Hall which could be an ideal location for events.

### Experiences

- **"Tourist in your own town" experiences** e.g. art crawl, urban wine bar experience, signage boards, bus tours of historic sites and signed trails/hikes.
- **Connected communities** e.g. more safe bike lanes, a High Street community room, outdoor seating in public spaces (e.g. outside the Reach Gallery), public art, a friendship garden and a connection between the downtown and U district.

### Events

- **Food festivals** e.g. food truck festival, Diner en Blanc at Mill Lake.
- **More frequent performances** e.g. Shakespeare/Live theatre in the Park.
- **Pride events, intercultural events** (such as the one Archway previously ran) and **international festivals** were also noted by participants.

As expected, many physical cultural assets related to arts and heritage were located close to downtown and Historic Abbotsford, while many agricultural/natural heritage-related assets, existing and desired, were dispersed throughout the surrounding areas of Abbotsford. Lastly, it is important to note that zoning (and the need to change current zoning regulations) would need to be changed in order to enable the development of a vibrant, culturally-rich atmosphere in Abbotsford, including considering affordable housing residences for artists in the City.

## Appendix A. Dotmocracy Activity Responses

**Table 1: Dotmocracy Board #1**

What challenges or barriers have you experienced in accessing arts or culture in Abbotsford, if any?		
Awareness	87	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lots of cultural events happen without awareness of them across other outside cultural groups. Need more cross-pollination of events awareness.</li> <li>▪ There seems to be a lot of cultural events that are focused on a particular culture but few that are a draw for many cultures at once.</li> <li>▪ Media communication!!</li> <li>▪ Awareness- all areas need support</li> <li>▪ Lack of awareness of City's history/diverse groups/neighborhoods leads to lack of identity with the City. More placemaking will help create civic pride and sense of belonging.</li> </ul>
Lack of variety/quality	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I drive to Vancouver for jazz/jazz fest/opera/art/cinema</li> </ul>
Cost	29	
Transportation	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parking</li> </ul>
A lack of things that are important to you culturally that are not listed here	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encouraging wider cultural events (Scandinavian as example)</li> </ul>
Scheduling conflict	23	
Feeling uncomfortable, unwelcome or unsafe	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of encouragement of other culture involvement with specific culturally focused events. Feelings of isolation based on language.</li> </ul>
Language	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Universal things are joy/laughter, arts/music</li> </ul>
Location	14	
Other (please specify by writing your option on a sticky note)	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Barrier restrictions</li> <li>▪ Lack of intercultural/interfaith/interbelief safety and interaction and understanding and cooperation</li> </ul>
I have none	3	

**Table 2: Dotmocracy Board #2**

What means do you think the City of Abbotsford should use to improve awareness of arts, culture and heritage events?		
More social media-based advertising	67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating opportunities for Arts Groups to advertise on City property (i.e. signage, pattison signs, etc)</li> <li>▪ Need an online “one stop shop” for culture</li> <li>▪ Target youth with this</li> <li>▪ Partnering with locals with large social media following</li> <li>▪ Different age groups use difference social media channels</li> </ul>
Increase awareness of centralized online website beyond the Parks, Recreation and Culture Guide	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pages on websites for events (see Municipality of Saanich)</li> <li>▪ Increased funding to organizations enables us to advertise our events</li> <li>▪ Youth ambassadors (or residents of all ages)</li> <li>▪ Use and strengthen existing platforms</li> </ul>
Signage visible (e.g., for heritage sites or art walks)	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signage for art walks- key historical events for Abbotsford</li> <li>▪ Signage that highlights local artists or opportunities to learn</li> <li>▪ Local Indigenous naming opportunity</li> <li>▪ More signs like Gallery 7s. Kelowna is a good example of a walkable city for signage.</li> </ul>
More stories/advertising in local newspaper	35	
Monthly newsletter from the City	14	
More stories/advertising on the radio	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Radio and more local TV to address these issues</li> </ul>
Word of mouth	13	
More stories/advertising on television throughout the Lower Mainland	10	
Other (please specify by writing your option on a sticky note)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lot more money (make per capita spend \$20)</li> <li>▪ All venues need to be used</li> <li>▪ New media channel between traditional mass media and free/social media</li> <li>▪ One unified community events calendar</li> <li>▪ Need our own TV show channel</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Dotmocracy Board #3**

<b>What do you think the City of Abbotsford should prioritize in developing the Culture Strategic Plan? (e.g. more performance spaces, Indigenous arts programs, focus on youth)</b>		
More free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support low income families</li> </ul>
Ensuring arts and culture-based activities are inclusive and accessible to the broadest range of participants	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where's the parking?</li> <li>Seniors programs</li> </ul>
Increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private business doesn't fund arts &amp; culture so we need to use public money- a lot more money</li> <li>Corporate sponsorship improved</li> </ul>
Activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretive plans for key City natural features leading to exhibits that are engaging, maintained, updates e.g. Fish Trap Creek signs are in poor condition</li> <li>We have a lot of events that are the "poster child" of each group – would be nice to see more events</li> <li>Nargar Kitan Parade has become more multicultural in the sense that everyone loves to see and enjoy the food and parade</li> </ul>
Indigenous arts programs and opportunities	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support (financially, marketing, etc) programs at Sumas and Matsqui First Nations. Collaborate with the SD (School District) 34 Indigenous Centre for urban Indigenous/Metis youth</li> </ul>
New and/or improved arts spaces	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of public facilities to engage in cultural events</li> <li>New and more art- visually impactful locations</li> </ul>
Improved marketing for greater awareness	32	
Public art	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As long as we don't get a \$5M chandelier, any public art is great!</li> </ul>
Youth-focused arts programming	20	
Increase City funding for culture	21	
Other (please specify by writing your option on a sticky note)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intercultural/interfaith understanding and cooperation (dialogue, devotional music, service projects)</li> </ul>

## Appendix B. Conversation Space Responses

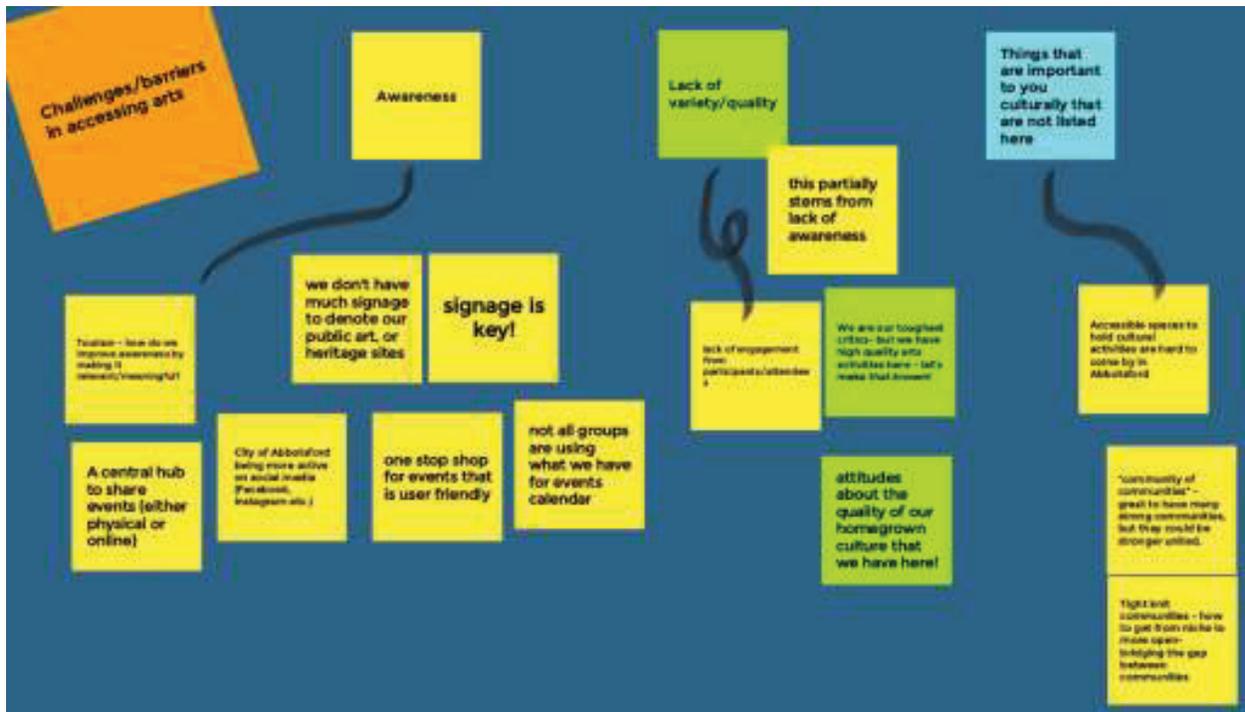
**Table 4: Conversation Space – Challenges and Solutions**

Identified Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Lack of variety/important culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dense food/cultural district</li> <li>▪ More live music (jazz, opera)</li> <li>▪ More heritage preservation/interpretation</li> <li>▪ Dance lessons</li> <li>▪ Comedy club</li> <li>▪ Reach programming</li> <li>▪ Kids festival/family programming</li> <li>▪ Heritage food event</li> <li>▪ Festivals around diversity</li> <li>▪ Free market</li> <li>▪ Nightlife</li> <li>▪ This partially stems from lack of awareness</li> <li>▪ Need to change attitudes about our homegrown culture</li> </ul>
Transportation/parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't sell parking spots</li> <li>▪ Better transit</li> <li>▪ More parking spaces/metered parking</li> <li>▪ Work with developers</li> <li>▪ Uber</li> </ul>
Digital advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One stop shop</li> <li>▪ Searchable/tagable content</li> <li>▪ Would be great to have reminders that you can sign up for (specific interests), then get reminders for events you may be interested in</li> </ul>
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Central calendar, and increase awareness of it</li> <li>▪ More easily searchable on internet</li> <li>▪ Actual "what's happening" board</li> <li>▪ Farm tour for culture</li> <li>▪ Collateral for tourists</li> <li>▪ What-to-do guide</li> <li>▪ Monthly email updates and e-blasts</li> <li>▪ Go to where people are- advertise at basketball games</li> <li>▪ Less generic City pages- leverage PRC newsletter</li> <li>▪ Use newspaper</li> <li>▪ Coordinate comms with arts organizations</li> </ul>

Identified Challenges	Proposed Solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Go direct to the community, two-way communication</li> <li>▪ Go through school board</li> <li>▪ More partnerships</li> <li>▪ Advertisement funding</li> <li>▪ Work with key stakeholders to spread the word</li> <li>▪ Language</li> <li>▪ Culture billboard program/ Pattison signs (grants) – a central hub to share events (either physical or online)</li> <li>▪ Combine tourism and culture- single source (on City website- see Saanich example)</li> <li>▪ Public art</li> <li>▪ Leverage social media</li> <li>▪ Tourism – how do we improve awareness by making it relevant/meaningful?</li> <li>▪ More signage to denote public art, heritage sites</li> <li>▪ Not all groups are using what we have for calendar events</li> </ul>
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performing arts</li> <li>▪ Deliberate planning</li> <li>▪ Plaza in historic downtown</li> <li>▪ Passion place</li> <li>▪ More than just public art</li> <li>▪ Venues suitable for arts</li> <li>▪ Ask the arts sector what they need</li> <li>▪ Multipurpose spaces</li> <li>▪ Location costs too high for most artist organizations</li> <li>▪ Consider capacity of venues</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of quality of people running non-profits</li> <li>▪ Provide regular training</li> <li>▪ “Community of communities”</li> <li>▪ Support (financially, marketing, etc) programs at Sumas and Matsqui First Nations. Collaborate with the SD (School District) 34 Indigenous Centre for urban Indigenous/Metis youth</li> </ul>

**Figure 4: Conversation Space – Digital Focus Group**

Below is a sample from the Conversation Space during digital focus groups, using Google’s Jam Board tool to encourage participants to expand on their dotmocracy votes:



## Appendix C. Cultural Mapping Responses

Figure 5: Spaces, experiences and events that already exist in Abbotsford

Already Exists		
Spaces/Places	Experiences	Events
North View Trail Running Club	Natural learning environments, used by local schools & youth groups- opportunity for environment stewardship	Tulip festival
Abby Grind (attract outdoor enthusiasts)	Cool view! (sunset) pink skies!	UFV 'S' building hosts a lot of events and culturally significant events
Fieldhouse	Community walks/hikes at Dawnes Bowl	ABDA Wine Walk
Beautiful trail! Needs signage and outhouses	McDonald Park Official Astronomy Viewing Point	Berry festival
Community gardens	Unique geology & features- caves, waterfalls, First Nations significance. Needs protection&management. Mckee South Flank	Tulip Festival
Archway community services	Abbotsford Arts Council life drawing 1xmonth	Neighbourhood garage + lock party
Public art mural behind willow video alleyway	Abbotsford regional park (horse trails, walking trails)	Vaisakini Parade Kalighdarh Gordwara
Aboriginal arts & culture day, June 14 2020	Daffodil fields	Voodoo Jet (airshow)
Skate park	Starfish donation programs (backpacks)	Tradex pet show
Olde Abbey Ales	Fleamarket (Agreg centre)	Tradex RV show
Raveig Brewing	Eagle Mtn Lookout on Eagle Summit Rd	Fraser Valley Poet's society
Mini Mill Lake	Arnold (example of Scandinavian enclave) on Vye rd	Abbotsford International Airshow
Friendship garden with a golden tree	1/4 mile street racing (Dixon rd)	MCC Sale & Festival
Maclure homestead		Canada Day festival
"Edger creek" with "logging shed" and culturally modified trees		Agrifair
Semeth Longhouse		Daffodil Festival
Powerhouse (Old)		Jam in Jubilee
Arnold Community Railway Tressels		Abbotsford Air Show
Trinity Memorial United Church, George Ferguson & Montrose		Diwali and Vaisakhi
Youth services		Jane's Walk Abbotsford
Gallery 7 Theatre, office, rehearsal hall		Symphony in the Park (August)
Public art		
Raszberry Indigenous art		
South Poplar Old Schoolhouse		
Peardonville Hall		
Abbotsford's children's theatre		
Clearbrook library		
Brodner Hall		
Temple		
Brodeurs Bistro		
Gians restaurant		
Circle farm/heritage tours		
Airport		
Albert Dyck Park (Walmsley Lake)		
Mennonite Heritage Museum		
Mennonite Historical Society of BC		
Civic Plaza		
Bible College		
Fieldhouse		
Yukyuku		
Afterthoughts Dessert Café		
Birchwood dairy		
Community rail district		
Beehive kilns (Sumas mountain rd)		
Ripples winery (Tolmie rd)		
Former site of Sumas lake (no. 5 rd)		
Mcdonald park/Dark Sky Park (Hwy 1/No3rd)		
Clayburn candy store/teahouse		
Abby Arts Collective- Jesse Klassen		
Christmas store		

**Figure 6: Spaces, experiences and events that people would like to see**

Would Like to See		
Spaces/Places	Experiences	Events
Good venue for bands to play with <u>good sound</u>	Natural resources for youth groups (canoeing, walks, water safety)	Food truck festival
Community garden of medicines	Adirondack chairs for all public spaces (for families)	More cultural events on UFV campus
Interurban line	Outdoor theatre	More city funding for the arts!
Better lit paths at Mill Lake	Signage boards	Pride
Signage for churches with donor and history info	"Tourist in your own town"	Jammin Jubilee
Mountain bike park	"Abbotsford experience" (like Victoria for the low season)	Barn Quilt - all along Trans Canada Highway 1
Theatre- create multiple spaces throughout the city	Theatre in the park	Intercultural, international events (like one that Archway used to run)
Outdoor theatre	Art crawl	Diner en blanc (Mill Lake)
Bigger swimming pool	Public art (downtown)	Bus tours of historic sites in Abbotsford & cultural sites
Built trails	High Street community room	Shakespeare/Live theatre in the Park
Proper outdoors performance space at Mill Lake	More safe bike lanes	Yoga in Jubilee Park (June-August)
Library (Old Clayburn rd or Mckee rd)	Friendship garden (near the Reach)	
Downtown food and culture district	Dog park (Whatcom rd + near Wright st)	
At least 2 more restaurants downtown	Connect the communities between downtown and U district	
Turner House restored	Lights in Jubilee Park after dark	
Plaza in downtown (for people watching!)- and a fountain	Fraser Valley Jazz society	
Permanent local food market (downtown)	Eco Dairy- Food and Farm experience	
Tuscan farm gardens (Mt Lehman rd)	Trails/hikes (Whatcom rd)	
	Downtown murals and signage	
	A gazebo in Jubilee Park	
	Urban wine bar experience	
	Off leash dog park/sports fields	
	Patio seating outside the Reach	

# **City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan**

## **Letter Responses to Stage 1**

### **Appendix D (Amended December 3, 2020)**

March 2, 2020

To: Abbotsford Mayor and City Council, City Manager, General Manager of Parks Recreation, and Director of Recreation and Culture

I am writing on behalf of the School of Creative Arts at the University of the Fraser Valley to express concerns about the State of Culture Report and the Culture Strategic Plan process undertaken to date. I echo many of the concerns raised by other leaders in the arts and culture community in Abbotsford, but write separately because I believe that the faculty in the School of Creative Arts are uniquely positioned to comment on the report and planning process due to our role educating artists and cultural workers, many of whom wish to contribute to Abbotsford's growing creative economy following their graduation from UFV.

I understand that the documents publicly circulated represent an initial stage of the planning process. I recognize, however, that these initial documents will form the groundwork for the process that will unfold and I have concerns about two issues that have the potential for significant impacts on the eventual outcomes of this process.

First, the process undertaken by the consultants in generating their report did not allow for meaningful input from the School of Creative Arts. The School of Creative Arts includes thirteen tenured or tenure-track faculty members, as well as fifteen part-time faculty. Our faculty hold terminal graduate degrees (MFAs and/or PhD's) and are recognized experts in their fields of artistic practice and research. Collectively the School represents a significant concentration of highly skilled experts, and its faculty are the primary post-secondary arts and culture educators in the Fraser Valley. As such, the School of Creative Arts has an exceptional perspective with regard to developing a thriving arts and culture sector in our community. Perhaps more importantly, we are acutely aware of the factors that will ensure that creative young people—our students and alumni—have a desire to remain in the Fraser Valley and contribute to the growth of arts and culture here.

I attended the roundtable discussion facilitated by the consultants this fall. The roundtable included a presentation of "trends and best practices." However, there was no opportunity for those in attendance to provide feedback on the consultants' identification of these items, to comment on their validity, or to consider their relationship to the specific Abbotsford context. The breakout discussion that followed focused only on a SWOT analysis that required various interest groups to align with these trends, rather than gathering feedback on the consultants' findings to that point. In short: the roundtable discussion began with a flawed and prescriptive framework and the facilitation that followed therefore could not generate meaningful responses.

Amended to include on December 3, 2020

That the School of Creative Arts was not recognized as a significant external stakeholder and that myself or members of the School were not interviewed by the consultants is a major oversight in the process and one I recommend the City rectifies if it hopes to generate meaningful engagement from the most significant body of arts and culture experts in the community. To be clear, neither participation in the focus group convened by the consultants nor the opportunities for community engagement outlined in the public report constitute meaningful consultation in this context. I do not wish to speak for others outside the School, but I would venture that other significant external stakeholders, most notably Indigenous arts experts and representatives of specific cultural communities within Abbotsford, might share my opinion that the consultation undertaken to this point has not been meaningful or thorough.

Second, I believe it is essential to challenge the decision to include the ‘trends and best practices’ listed in the “State of Culture Report,” as they are very troubling. While it is unclear how the ‘trends and best practices’ in the report will inform future phases of this process, because these particular ideas were also the core of the presentation I attended, I believe that they will play a significant role in the final culture strategy.

Trends and best practices are not synonymous. While the three points identified on p. 11 of the report may reflect current trends, they are not indicative of best practices for promoting a thriving arts and culture ecology, particularly in our specific context. In particular, to suggest that relying less on the development of cultural infrastructure and that alternative (i.e. non-municipal) funding will promote strong arts and culture communities is highly problematic. The report illustrates one alternative to new physical infrastructure, which is to present works of art as a decorative addition to public spaces. This demonstrates a terribly narrow understanding of the role that the arts play in thriving, healthy communities. Further, to suggest that cities should delegate support for the delivery of arts and culture services to the private sector puts the growth and sustainability of the sector in peril and charges already understaffed organizations with their own survival. While there is obviously an opportunity for artists, non-governmental foundations, and the private sector to partner in the support of this crucial sector, this seems hazardous in the context of Abbotsford, where existing arts infrastructure is minimal and per-capita funding for the arts is already critically low. I fail to understand how moves away from either supporting cultural infrastructure or municipal funding support for arts and culture could possibly benefit the wellbeing of the citizens of Abbotsford.

The report’s recognition that “celebrating diversity” is a trend or best practice is problematic as well, albeit for different reasons. Time and again we see “festival culture” and other tokenistic attempts at intercultural engagement work to trivialize diverse groups. Diversity is too often used strategically, to gesture toward intercultural awareness that does not, in fact, manifest itself in civic life. Once again, the consultants do not seem to have included significant or meaningful consultation with representatives of the diverse communities that the City presumably hopes to leverage as it moves forward. Underlining this is the misleading visual information in the report: while the cover of the document includes images of diversity, they are presented without context or credit to the artists represented. The report goes on to include no suggestion that the artists whose images are used, or

members of their communities, were approached by consultants for their input, but instead will be part of the process directed at the general public.

To be clear, I think the City's decision to develop a culture strategy and its desire for consultation and feedback are positive things. My concern is that the process itself prevents the kind of engagement that would allow for a progressive strategy to emerge and that the City is not making use of the experts, from UFV and from other cultural groups in Abbotsford, at its disposal. As a way to correct the course from this point on, I highly recommend that the City convenes an external advisory group, made up of recognized experts in the community, to provide meaningful feedback throughout the process and to inform at each phase of the development of the final cultural strategy.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "HDF", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Heather Davis-Fisch, PhD

Director, School of Creative Arts, University of the Fraser Valley

To Abbotsford City Council, PRC General Manager, Recreation and Culture Director and City Manager,

As the Abbotsford Arts Council we are pleased to have been acknowledged so distinctly in the first stage of the Culture Strategy process report. As an organization that has been severely under acknowledged and underutilized in the past we feel this is a step in the right direction. It demonstrates the City Council's appreciation and ongoing support for artists in this community. However, we have many concerns with the report that was presented to Council, and in particular the manner in which it was developed.

This letter is in no way an exhaustive list of our concerns, but it does give you an idea of where we are. We are hoping that this will initiate a process of re-evaluation and will lead to more meaningful interaction with cultural leadership going forward.

We have concerns surrounding the validity of the data and conclusions of the report. For example, that 2017 census statistics are being used for all other cities compared in the report with the exception of Abbotsford, where budgeted 2020 numbers are used, is questionable. This gives the reader an unrealistic view of what the Arts & Culture sector in Abbotsford has actually been receiving per capita, and in particular the Arts Council. For the first time in decades, 2020 will see a significant influx of operational funds, from the \$18,400 until 2018 and the \$28,400 in 2019. This conflicting representation of comparative data skews the perspective of how we are able to operate now and moving forward. It misrepresents the state of culture in this community, as well as the City's historical buy-in to its prosperity.

It is a fundamental problem that the first key point of the report is the trend of not building new infrastructure - this is incredibly dangerous as the Arts & Culture sector has been begging for increased infrastructure for decades, and while The Reach was a new introduction, it's staff and board by and large agree that it does not satisfy all of the needs our community has identified repeatedly over the years. There is a significant need for an affordable performance space.

The Arts Council rallied an ad-hoc group of Abbotsford Arts Council members to address this report and solidify our concerns, and we have heard a resounding dismay and exhaustion for the process. Many have said they have participated in a plethora of discussions over the last 20 plus years and "nothing has ever come of it." This demonstrates the past frustrations with the City in terms and a reluctance to go through the process again. As a fresh executive team and board members we are excited to work with the city, however rallying our member groups has proven difficult because of their disillusionment with past efforts and the overall sense, based on the process and results of this first-phase document, that the status quo will be maintained.

The arts community in Abbotsford is a unique community that engages producers and audiences in a mutually supportive network. It is a community which could, with sufficient support, flourish. However, expanding and diversifying that community, drawing artists in and retaining excellent artistic talent within the community is difficult when many are drawn to cities with developed, well-supported cultural ecologies. For this reason, we had hoped that the Arts Council and the arts community would have been a more integral part of the data collection and consultative process, becoming active participants in the planning for our future. Instead, find that the expertise of the artistic community represented by the Arts Council has been lumped into the public consultation process.

As cultural practitioners, we both contribute to and rely on the vitality of arts and culture in Abbotsford. The lack of targeted consultation on part of the City has led us to doubt the validity of this report. I would like to relate this to an analogy one of my colleagues told me: when a city builds a sewer they work directly with engineers, planners, and developers throughout the process because they are the professionals with the appropriate expertise for the job. Like sewers, roads, and other infrastructure, the culture sector has both direct and indirect impacts on quality of life, economic growth, and livability in our community. We are asking why, then, are those with the most expertise in the cultural sector only briefly in the process of developing a culture strategy which, like other forms of infrastructure, will impact our community in years to come? In order to build the vitality of culture in this community, the direct inclusion of local arts and culture professionals or practitioners is *necessary*. We feel that this input was disregarded in favour of an internal process which has set the stage for continued stasis in our sector.

We believe that the artist community and the Arts Council should have a more meaningful and integral part of this process to properly reflect the realistic trends, best practices, and opportunities for art in this community. We want to work with the city on this endeavour. As the leader of this organization, I am still optimistic and grateful for the significant progress that's been made to date since my hiring. That said, our trust and faith in the City to sufficiently involve the arts community in its own future is tarnished. Our member groups feel that they have been ignored, misled and taken advantage of so far in this process. We hope that you will care enough about the outcome of the strategy to take steps to address this.

We are very much open to future collaboration and discussion as we want to see a Culture Strategy move forward. However a more meaningful inclusion of the Abbotsford Arts Council and its members is a component we feel is absolutely necessary in order to do this.

We look forward to discussing this further with you.

Regards,

Jennifer Trithardt-Tufts, Executive Director - Abbotsford Arts Council

Abbotsford Arts Council Board of Directors

**Abbotsford Arts Council members supporting this letter:**

Gallery 7

Abbotsford Children's Theater

Fraser Valley Stage Production

Xtreme Talent

Valley Festival Singers Society

Nadia Dodd

Kyler Pierce

Abbotsford Photo Arts Club

Central Fraser Valley Graphics Guild

Fraser Valley Watermedia Society

February 29th, 2020



To Abbotsford City Council, PRC General Manager, Recreation and Culture Director and City Manager

I'm writing to you regarding the State of Culture Report on behalf of CIVL 101.7 FM and the stakeholders we represent: the UFV student body, as well as many of the groups and associations through which students engage in their communities, whether culturally through various clubs, academically with their department associations or through the many arts and culture providers and advocates that work with us every year in continuing to provide the backbone to a vibrant community in the Fraser Valley.

UFV's School of Creative Arts (SOCA), the academic umbrella body governing the varied Bachelor of Fine Arts programs at UFV, has been consulted and supports this letter in full. SOCA Director Heather Davis-Fisch also expects to provide a letter from the perspective of faculty. Numerous other organizations have been consulted, and will be providing their own letters in the coming weeks. We appreciate that the COA desires immediate and direct engagement in moving this report forward, however the limited resources available to our partner groups in the community require that for above board consideration of these issues, and the significance of making official statements to the city, longer timelines will be necessary in order for their feedback to be approved before registering them in a communication to City Hall.

I've personally sat on the Citizens Advisory Commission that informed the COA's Official Community Plan in 2016, the Parks, Rec and Culture Committee in Abbotsford this past term, and since accepting the role as station manager at CIVL prior to its implementation on 101.7 FM in August of 2010, I have put down deep roots in the structures and organizations that facilitate and develop local artists, as well as their cultural programming providers and partners throughout the Fraser Valley.

Over this time, CIVL has hired, trained and worked with hundreds of volunteers and paid student and community staff members. We have benefitted from over 100,000 hours of volunteerism in programming, governance, promotion, and tech, bringing over \$200,000 of grant funding into the local community, in addition to over \$165,000 of approximate annual operational funding that has gone directly into the community in the forms of new full time jobs, thousands annually to Indigenous cultural programming grants, over \$1,000 in annual student scholarships, over \$10,000 in annual funding to artists in annual Fraser Valley Music Awards contributions, and thousands of dollars of support a year to local events and other arts and cultural initiatives. CIVL has hosted all-candidates debates for every municipal and provincial election since 2010, and has sponsored or supported countless Abbotsford Community Services/Archway, UFV, the South Asian Studies Institute, the COA, and other community initiatives.

CIVL has built all of this despite beginning with a \$60,000 annual budget back in 2005, and we are expanding to Chilliwack in 2021 to broadcast on 92.3 FM with UFV's partnership.

For all of this work, CIVL has won numerous programming awards locally and nationally, including Community Development in 2011 and Local Talent Development in 2018 from the National Community Radio Association, and both 2011 and 2016 Fraser Valley Cultural Diversity Awards for Inclusive Environment and Marketing the FVMAs.

Though CIVL is the newest campus-based community radio station in Canada, we hosted the 36th annual National Campus Community and Radio Conference at UFV Abbotsford, which over 100 delegates from dozens of communities across Canada attended. Here we received 4 National Community Radio Awards, more than any of the 100+ member stations that year.

The relationship that CIVL has had with local arts and culture has been documented by the CBC, VICE, Global News, Macleans, AudioTree, and all across Fraser Valley print media including AbbyNews and all of the Black Press affiliates and other local daily/weekly publications, Raspberry, in addition to weekly features in the UFV Cascade. CIVL was not, however, referenced in the State of Culture Plan in any way.

For all of the reasons above, we speak from a position of experience and expertise when it comes to developing arts and culture in Abbotsford, and for those reasons, I've been tasked with providing this letter aimed at urging the City of Abbotsford to halt and re-evaluate its current culture plan public outreach process, and to first engage in meaningful consultation with the arts and cultural providers that work in the community.

The need for this letter has been born out of a concern for A) the flawed methodology exhibited, B) misleading presentation of data included, and C) mis-identification of trends and best practises relied on in the State of Culture Report discussed recently by City Council.

An exhaustive list of concerns and possible solutions requires in depth discussion and consultation with the undersigned, and the professionals at The Reach and Abbotsford Arts Council, whom I understand have already provided letters that reflect a similar sentiment.

To date, the hours of public engagement, work groups and consultation that the members of groups we engage with have participated in have not received meaningful consideration with regards to the implementation of the trends and best practises outlined in this document, save the completely agreeable but weightless catchphrase of 'celebrate diversity'.

Cultural partners have repeatedly identified significant concepts that are key to understanding the rich potential of the highly active cultural programmers and purveyors in this community. However, they have also accurately assessed the need that these cultural stakeholders have for opportunities to develop their projects and reach their fullest potentials. The opportunities that exist in the Fraser Valley with which our cultural stakeholders can develop the long lasting impact of a thriving cultural economy are not reasonably supported through the current trends and best practises. The state of our current cultural economy inhibits opportunities for the authentic generators of local culture in this community. Talented artists, cultural creators and cultural influencers who originate right here in Abbotsford are forced to relocate to cities like Chilliwack or Vancouver because there are no attractive prospects available to entice them to stay and the state of culture only grows more bleak. In this way, the current weaknesses of culture in Abbotsford are only exacerbated by a feedback loop of cultural poverty that finds its origin in lack of adequate support and funding from the top. The City desperately needs to prioritize investing in its local producers of culture if it seriously wants to see the growth of vibrant cultural programs in Abbotsford. If our goal is to facilitate truly thriving, diverse cultures, then support for local, productive cultural stakeholders needs to be clearly defined in the current trends and best practices going forward.

The groups represented by this letter feel as if the above contributions we've made and the various opportunities we've been given to influence this process have been lost, ignored, or overshadowed.

They receive the representation of the COA's 2020 cultural spend in comparison to other cities' 2017 numbers to be presented in bad faith: a small number of marginal but necessary influxes in funding are coming for this year, and this inflates the current cultural spend, but these contributions have been sorely lacking for years, in the case of the Abbotsford Arts Council, for decades, and still don't in and of themselves make up for the chasm that's been dug into municipal arts and culture work in Abbotsford.

As a result, CIVL and others have been forced to engage in work that fills the void of 1) grant providing, 2) facilitating artist mentoring and organizational support, and 3) the procurement and promotion of spaces and engagement opportunities for our arts and cultural consumers and producers to fill.

The numbers presented ignore this inappropriate distribution of work amongst our cultural partners, while softening the stark contrast between cultural spending from this city compared to others. This fiscal policy has contributed to an environment where the staff and groups responsible for curating and sculpting current cultural landscape are overburdened and burnt out, and this report only serves to enshrine that status quo as a mantra.

The public relations that the COA puts out point to Abbotsford receiving hundreds of millions of dollars of development spending, a booming film industry, and many other positive economic stories, including businesses that benefit from a close knit community of upper-middle class cliques that continue to gentrify and displace grass roots arts in our city. However we continue to hear that there is not enough money to fund the arts and culture the way other communities do, or the way the arts professionals like those who work for CIVL, The Reach, and other partners in our community say we need to.

The conversation needs to start by asking where else can we spend instead of looking for other ways to avoid supporting the diverse, dedicated and talented local artists in Abbotsford, as well as the growing demographic of young people who desperately want to continue to live in Abbotsford, but are repeatedly being reminded of why they can't.

Aaron Levy - CIVL Station Manager  
C: 778-982-0648 - O: 604-851-6306 - E: [info@civl.ca](mailto:info@civl.ca)



City of Abbotsford  
32315 South Fraser Way  
Abbotsford, BC  
V2T 1W8

May 5, 2020

RE: Culture Strategic Plan Process

Dear City Staff;

I am writing to express my thoughts and concerns regarding the Culture Strategy process in general, and the State of Culture report in particular. My goal in sharing these comments is to encourage the City to revise the report in order to clarify City intent and provide a more accurate assessment of arts and cultural activity in the city. I further hope my comments will encourage a more comprehensive consultation process with the arts and culture sector at every step of the strategy development process.

First, please allow me to share a little bit about our organization. Gallery 7 Theatre was founded in 1991 and in the past 29 years, the organization has produced over 100 productions. Currently, the Society employs approximately 150 volunteers, contract artists and paid staff to produce four mainstage productions each season. We also produce a second-stage series featuring Abby Theatre Fest, a festival of one-act plays, a guest comedy improv event and a Christmas variety show in partnership with Vancouver's Pacific Theatre. From time to time, we also offer the community theatre-related training workshops and short courses.

Last year, over 12,000 people, hailing from all over the Fraser Valley and Lower Mainland, attended our productions. Our annual budget is approximately \$300,000, of which 55% of our revenues come from ticket sales. The rest must be fundraised through private donations, corporate sponsorships, and government grants. In 2018-2019, we estimate that our volunteers contributed approximately 14,500 hours in order to deliver our programs. We operate a small office and rehearsal hall near the Sumas/US border, and present our productions in multiple venues through-out the City including the Abbotsford Arts Centre, the Abbotsford Community Arts Addition and the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium. We are an incorporated non-profit society and a registered charity, and the entire community is invited to participate in our programs.

As a frequent provider of live theatre programming in our community, I am delighted that the City is developing a culture strategy, but with the initial public consultation process now underway, I have noted some concerning issues:

- The *State of Culture* report indicates that consultation with external stakeholders was completed. This is only partially true. Gallery 7 Theatre participated in one round-table workshop in fall of 2019 and we received no further invitations by the City to participate. Participants in these round-tables were not consulted on the draft report before it was published. There is very little reference to external stakeholder's input, except in passing, and stakeholders who attended are not listed in the Appendices. One is left to wonder why? The report suggests that input was primarily gathered from City staff, and I feel that a comprehensive *State of Culture* report should include direct input and feedback from culture practitioners in the community.

- The report shows that the planning team for the Culture Strategy process is comprised entirely of City staff. With the exception of the Culture coordinator, there appears to be no other culture professionals on this team, practitioners who could provide valuable insights in to a comprehensive, unique-to-Abbotsford culture strategy. This raises concern about the validity of the information being provided.
- While revealing that certain ‘trends’ and ‘best practices’ resonated with City staff, there is no indication in the report as to how these ‘trends’ and ‘best practices’ were identified and there is no indication that the arts and culture sector was consulted before these ‘trends’ and ‘best practices’ were determined. I fear that without proper context, this list of ‘trends’ and ‘best practices’ is sending problematic messages to the general public that could easily be mis-construed.

Suggesting ‘less reliance on physical infrastructure’ as a ‘trend’ is deeply concerning. Existing infrastructure in our city can not support the amount of performing arts activities taking place each year. Due to its primary use as Council Chambers, the MCA is impractical for long theatrical runs that a theatre organization requires to be financially viable. The Abbotsford Arts Centre prioritizes School District operations, and community groups compete for remaining availability once schools have secured their dates. There is no guarantee that the School District will continue to allow community groups to use the facility in the future.

Suggesting that groups could use parks, parking lots and plazas as ‘unique’ and ‘authentic’ places does not take in to account environmental challenges such as ambient noise and weather, not to mention the significant investment of time, resources and finances a cultural group would have to undertake to make these spaces suitable. This approach is not feasible for some types of performing arts activities.

Citing a Vancouver project as an example of ‘less reliance on new physical infrastructure’ is misleading. The City of Vancouver already has many traditional arts and cultural spaces already. How can a community be ‘less reliant’ on physical infrastructure when it has so little to begin with?

- The report identifies the Abbotsford Youth Commission as a key organization to deliver arts programming for youth in our community. While I fully support the Abbotsford Youth Commission, the concept alluded to above does not acknowledge that youth involvement is already inherent in arts and culture programming provided by community organizations such as Gallery 7 Theatre.
- The report suggests that seeking alternative funding and support for arts, culture and heritage, is needed. This is only partially true, and success would depend on City investment programs such as cultural grants.

My experience has shown that corporate sponsorship is not the low-hanging fruit that some would think. To suggest that for-profit corporations could support arts organizations through business skills education to build capacity is over-simplifying the matter and is a bit insulting, especially to professional, non-profit organizations. For-profit practices can often be at odds with cultural innovation, development, risk-taking, and expression, core values of non-profit cultural organizations. While expertise is welcomed, our business

community could also afford some education on the importance of investing in cultural activities through sponsorships, donations, etc. as part of their corporate citizenry.

Furthermore, the report suggests that Arts Vest is a good example of private/public partnerships but this is not accurate. Arts Vest is selective in what communities it serves during a grant cycle and is not an ongoing, significant source of corporate support. While Gallery 7 Theatre was a recipient of a grant several years ago, the Society has not received any further funding from Arts Vest since. This is *not* a guaranteed funding source.

- While increased funding for arts and culture ‘fee for service’ groups is very appreciated and encouraged, I am disappointed that ‘external’ stakeholders, who provide equally important programs and services, were not also beneficiaries of this increased funding. I am a strong supporter of the idea that the City should be making community-wide arts and culture funding available through municipal grant programs. Such investments see favourable social and economic returns for the community.
- The report appears contradictory: on the one hand, it suggests ‘best practices’ and ‘trends’ that resonate with City staff, yet on the other, the report strongly infers that the City is sorely behind in its support of Arts and Culture when compared to other similar cities. Furthermore, the report seems to lack any kind of comprehensive assessment of cultural activity in the community, casting doubt on the value of the report in the first place.

Regrettably, my concerns above lead me to think that the City has already pre-determined the outcomes it desires from the consultation process and is manipulating the public’s perception to favour these outcomes. The report, and process as a whole, further suggests the Culture Strategy is really about creating an internal City Hall document rather than developing a true community-based culture plan of which the City is one of many key stakeholders, facilitators and investors.

We have the opportunity to finally develop a comprehensive master plan for arts and culture in Abbotsford, and I strongly urge the City to revise the *State of Culture* report to clear up confusion, clarify intent and more accurately depict the state of culture in our community. I encourage the city to replace the current public survey with one that utilizes statistical best practices and assesses the public’s perceptions of, and engagements with, arts and culture in an in-depth manner. I also strongly encourage the City to consult and seek direct input from the collective of arts and culture stakeholders every step of the way. I am eager to participate in the process, both as a citizen and as an arts and culture professional; however, I am hesitant to do so until the above issues are addressed and rectified.

Together, we can make Abbotsford a desirable community to live, work and play. This starts with a clear, comprehensive and inclusive Culture strategy the entire community can be proud of.

Sincerely,



**Ken Hildebrandt**  
Executive/Artistic Director

the reach

Gallery Museum  
Abbotsford



City of Abbotsford  
32315 S Fraser Way  
Abbotsford, BC  
V2T 1X1

February 24, 2020

Mayor Braun and City Councilors,

On behalf of The Reach Gallery Museum Board of Directors, we are responding to the State of Culture Report recently presented to Abbotsford City Council. As noted, “this report will inform the development of a city-wide Culture Strategy...which will ultimately provide Council, staff, and the public with a vision, direction and framework to guide how the City will manage, deliver, support and integrate culture into policy and planning that will foster the cultural vitality that makes Abbotsford unique, vibrant and resilient.”

We have serious concerns with the State of Culture Report as presented, and believe that if these concerns are not addressed, the finalized strategic plan for culture will fall far short of the intention of council in initiating this work.

In brief, our concerns are as follows: the consultation process for this report did not allow for feedback from key stakeholders involved in the interview process before being received by Council and released to the public; the methodology and content in the “Trends and Best Practices” section is highly problematic; and finally, the vague definition of culture proposed in this document devalues the work of those who make direct contributions to this sector and further obscures the goals of the strategic plan for culture that will result from this process.

Before providing specific detail about the major concerns we have with the report, we wish to be clear that our remarks are not intended to reflect negatively on the hard work by city staff that is clearly evident.

**Board of Directors**

Milt Walker, *Chair*  
Colin Reimer, *Vice-Chair*  
Rex Leonard, *Treasurer*  
Rick Rake, *Secretary*  
Laura Authier  
Summer Dhillon  
Diane Griffiths  
Kam Grewal  
Stephanie Talbot  
Carrielynn Victor  
Charles Wiebe

**Executive Director**

Laura Schneider

thereach

Gallery Museum  
Abbotsford



We are writing because we believe it is critical to the success of the City's plan for culture that we do all we can to ensure the Culture Strategic Plan has the best chance of succeeding in meeting the City's long term goals for all its core planning documents.

Our first concern is the process by which this report was developed to the stage of presentation to Council and thereafter to the public. We acknowledge the early stage consultation with representatives of the cultural community in Abbotsford. However, we have reservations about the extent to which the experience and expertise of Abbotsford's cultural community is accurately reflected in key sections of the report.

There was no process for follow-up to this early consultation, and no other opportunity for contribution from professionals and organizations with experience and expertise in delivering culture. Not surprisingly given this truncated process, the finalized report appears to have downplayed or even ignored the views of the professionals and organizations who actually deliver culture in Abbotsford.

To illustrate, we provide a brief commentary on the section titled *Trends and Best Practices* (p. 11) and on the implications of these statements for the future stages of the process.

The methodology for this section was cited as follows: "Although a longer list of trends was presented by the consultant to the City, we have selected the following for further analysis that seems to have resonated most with internal municipal staff."

Before addressing the trends cited, we question the methodology resulting in this best practices list. We believe that better consultation with critical stakeholders would have resulted in identifying other viable practices applying to Abbotsford's unique and diverse cultural environment. At a minimum, and to facilitate trust and open dialogue

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Abbotsford



with delivery organizations, stakeholders, and our wider community, we propose that the longer list cited should have been appended to the report.

The result is that the summary of trends and best practices cited reads simply as two serious challenges facing The Reach and other cultural organizations today, and one general platitude which is too broad to be actionable in a meaningful way.

The first best practice cited calls for “less reliance on new physical infrastructure” in developing a vibrant, viable and diverse cultural strategy. The primacy given to this statement is striking and reads as a closed door to future investment.

We acknowledge the challenges that Council faces in balancing priorities when considering investment in new infrastructure. Evidence, however, suggests that investment in new physical infrastructure for culture is in fact a trend in many Canadian cities, including several in British Columbia. In the past two years, for example, Kamloops, Vernon, Delta, Surrey, Victoria, Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Coquitlam have cultural infrastructure projects in various stages of planning or completion (see attachment). We question whether this statement pre-empts the possibility of exploring useful insights and/or trends in other cities that are currently making, or are planning to make, significant investments in cultural infrastructure.

Elsewhere in the document, the desire to consign creative activity to non-arts spaces as an alternative to new infrastructure is cited. We understand that the practice of activating these kinds of spaces (e.g. picnic shelters, laneways, shop fronts) is an excellent complement to dedicated spaces for art production and presentations across creative disciplines like theatre, music, dance, visual arts, and others. It is not, however, a replacement strategy, and its apparent inclusion suggests a

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Abbotsford



limited understanding of the ways in which these elements interact to develop and enhance culture.

“Alternative funding and support for culture” is cited as the third best practice for the development of culture in Abbotsford. The practice in our sector has consistently been to develop and rely on diverse revenue streams to support the services we deliver to the citizens of this community. The framing of this activity in the report does not acknowledge the current reality in cultural organizations in Abbotsford and we do not understand the intention in selecting this as one of three trends to consider.

Citing “celebrating diversity” as a best practice is becoming a foundational statement for public and private organizations in Canada today. To be effective, this cannot occur in the absence of meaningful input from representatives of the communities that are identified as “diverse” who do not appear to have been explicitly included in this process. We believe this may be the deepest disappointment and failing of this important foundational document in the planning process of developing a strategic plan for culture in Abbotsford.

The report notes that “culture is more than simply the enjoyment of arts, music and heritage. It is the force that tells Abbotsford’s story, shapes identity, creates a sense of belonging and brings people together. It impacts economic prosperity, social well-being, and quality of life.” However, the findings in the report offer no useful understanding of the intersection between the fields that are described as “arts, music and heritage” and this broader definition of culture. Nor does it foreground the significant contributions being made by individual practitioners or existing organizations to the vitality of the cultural sector. Importantly, the report does not provide insight into the ways in which the sector is a vehicle for developing and enhancing cultural

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diversity in our community. As an essential document from which to build the Cultural Strategic Plan, this is a marked omission.

We are concerned that the incomplete process and resulting information in the State of Culture Report will continue to shape the outcome of the final strategy if the issues we raise are not addressed. Therefore, we respectfully advise that the gaps in the report compel you to consider a more formal process that will better leverage the existing expertise in the cultural community, beyond invitations to host our own engagement sessions noted in the next steps in the process.

Abbotsford has an incredible resource in the members of its cultural community who have extensive education, professional training, and decades of experience in leading and our cultural organizations and programs as paid professionals or credible volunteers. This resource, and especially its professionals and leaders, should be heavily involved going forward to get this right. Their meaningful involvement is integral to the success of this endeavour.

Sincerely,

Milt Walker  
Chair, Board of Directors  
The Reach Gallery Museum



## List of Cultural Infrastructure projects in British Columbia (2017-present)

1. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (\$30 million, expansion proposal)  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/art-gallery-victoria-expansion-1.5457045>
2. Kamloops (\$70 million arts center, new build proposal)  
<https://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/news/new-70-million-performing-arts-centre-pitched-for-downtown-kamloops-1.23585438>
3. Vernon Museum & Art Gallery (\$40 million, new build proposal)  
<https://infotel.ca/newsitem/new-vernon-art-gallery-and-museum-given-40m-price-tag/it52762>
4. Coquitlam (no costing done at time of publishing, new build proposal)  
<https://www.tricitynews.com/entertainment/a-new-home-for-maillardville-arts-1.23970551>
5. Vancouver Art Gallery (new build proposal)  
<https://www.straight.com/arts/1191826/new-vancouver-art-gallery-be-named-chan-centre-visual-arts-after-40-million-donation>
6. North Delta Center for the Arts/ Delta (\$7.7 million, arts center)  
<https://www.delta-optimist.com/news/delta-arts-centre-nearing-completion-1.23830748>
7. Polygon Gallery/ North Vancouver (\$20 million, art gallery)  
<https://vancouver.sun.com/entertainment/local-arts/van-live-new-polygon-gallery-part-of-lower-lonsdale-revival>
8. Surrey Museum/ Surrey (\$16 million building expansion)

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Gallery Museum  
Abbotsford



<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/museum-of-surrey-reopening-2018>

9. Surrey Art Gallery (\$50 million new build proposal)

<https://www.surreynowleader.com/news/new-interactive-art-museum-pitched-for-surreys-city-centre-area/>

# City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan

## 'Host Your Own Engagement' - Key Interest Groups Summary Report

### Appendix E

July 2020

## 1. Introduction

This summary report highlights the key themes explored during discussions amongst participants of the City of Abbotsford's Culture Strategic Plan public workshops, taking place throughout June and July 2020. This report is part of a larger community engagement process and is additional to feedback gathered from other stakeholders, such as City representatives, residents, organizations, businesses and those working within arts and culture in Abbotsford. Combined, these findings will inform the development of the Culture Strategic Plan for the City of Abbotsford.

Conducting a "Host Your Own" community engagement session has allowed key interest groups in Abbotsford to share their thoughts on arts, culture and heritage in the City, and where they feel they play a role in the future of culture.

In total, 3 'Host Your Own Engagement' focus group sessions took place, involving the following stakeholder groups:

- **Abbotsford Youth Commission** (session run independently)
- **University of the Fraser Valley** (session supported by Nordicity)
- **Abbotsford Filmmakers** (session run independently)

The following sections summarize key elements highlighted during these sessions, including identified strengths, challenges and opportunities steering each stakeholder group's priorities for arts, culture and heritage development in Abbotsford.

### 1.1 Abbotsford Youth Commission

The Abbotsford Youth Commission hosted its own engagement conversation specifically with its Youth Council and LEAD (Lead, Explore and Develop) groups. All students who participated were in grades 9-12 from various high schools in Abbotsford. The event was held via Cisco Webex virtual conference call. In total, 19 youth attended the online event.

Abbotsford's **unique strengths** in the arts, culture and heritage were discussed as a starting point after studying the Cultural Resources Framework (adapted from Statistics Canada Framework for Cultural Statistics). Youth identified celebrations and events such as **Canada Day** at Rotary, **Sikh parades and Agrifair** as just some of the events that demonstrate Abbotsford's strength through diversity of represented cultures at such celebrations. **Land acknowledgements** were noted as particularly integral to protocols before meetings, as well as historic sites and monuments such as Abbotsford's Sikh Temple, the first in North America. Youth noted a "strong sense of various communities", "lots of diversity" both in schools, restaurants, community centres, workplaces and places of worship.

#### When asked what culture in Abbotsford means to you...

"Abbotsford residents have the ability to see people for who they are, just people. They are accepted, valued and included."

Abbotsford Youth Commission

Many **challenges** were noted in accessing arts and culture in Abbotsford. Among these challenges were **transportation** (a problem also faced by seniors with limited access to private vehicles), **lack of awareness**, and a **lack of connectivity between cultural groups** despite lots of information sharing *within* communities of the same cultural background (e.g. South Asian community). **Fear of judgement or being a minority** persists between communities, as does the language barrier faced by many youth's family members. Youth are also concerned about the **trustworthiness of**

**information** shared about events online – parents would be less concerned about **safety of allowing their adolescent children to attend events** if they were shared on a centralized, City-run platform. Youth cited a **lack of opportunity**, or advertising of opportunity, within Abbotsford, as well as a continuous challenge to learn and **integrate with other cultural groups**. **Cultural siloes persist** for youth, who would like to see Abbotsford become a place where history of different cultures and their respective struggles are shared, as well as “what they have to done to progress culture in Abbotsford.”

Despite challenges, youth were excited to learn that culture is a priority for the City and expressed interest in seeing the City get more involved in cultural learning opportunities within the classroom. Solutions proposed by youth included **more advertisement**, more legitimate **support from the City, promotion** within schools and “education of different cultures in school to youth.”

## 1.2 University of the Fraser Valley – School of Creative Arts

Members of the UFV and SoCA community shared thoughts on culture in Abbotsford and what it means to them both as residents of Abbotsford and as representatives of the University. Participants included a diverse array of UFV community members, including faculty, alumni, and administrative staff.

Challenges facing the UFV in supporting arts and culture in Abbotsford include **lack of awareness, lack of variety/quality** of cultural offerings, and **scheduling conflicts**. Like many other stakeholders, UFV community members would like to see more **signage** as well as a **one-stop-shop**, online and offline, to find cultural information across all organizations. Participants see issues related to adequate **programmable space** linked to the lack of variety and quality felt among stakeholders – Abbotsford has a large theatre presence but lacks a professional theatre in which to perform. Because of these challenges, many **SoCA alumni** leave Abbotsford after graduation due to **perceived lack of opportunity**.

Stakeholders noted more **social media-based advertising**, increased awareness of **centralized online platform** beyond the PRC guide, and **visible signage** as key means to improve community engagement and awareness of cultural programming in Abbotsford. Some key priorities that the UFV community would like to see the City take on include increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations, through **grants that support operating costs**, promoting the value of the arts, and **subsidized marketing**. New and improved, **purpose-built spaces** are key to developing the arts and culture – a priority echoed among most stakeholders throughout. **Indigenous arts programs and opportunities** were also highlighted as key priorities; bringing to the forefront the rich and unique culture and heritage of Indigenous communities on the land on which Abbotsford is located.

Of importance in today’s current climate is the discussion around diversity and inclusion. The celebration of **LGBTQ2+ community and Pride events** were noted as a missing component to Abbotsford Cultural Resources Framework, despite the community’s growing presence. Participants noted that in developing the Culture Strategic Plan, the City should consider how we might move beyond “celebrating diversity,” and instead take it further by establishing a **distinctly anti-racist foundation** to the strategy. Overall, UFV participants see themselves as key contributors to the City’s culture, and with support from the City, are keen to support awareness building, coordinate different groups, and engage students and alumni in making Abbotsford a cultural centre in the Fraser Valley.

## 1.3 Abbotsford Filmmakers

Six local filmmakers met up for a socially distanced lunch discussion guided by the questions set out in the facilitators guide. Organizers used a projector to display several of the infographics, including the Cultural Resources Framework, and questions from the guide.

Participants noted that as filmmakers in the Fraser Valley, they feel supported by businesses and residents, who are “very willing to help facilitate filmmakers when they need access to space and locations for filming.” The group reported a stark contrast with filmmaking in Vancouver, where filmmakers’ finances can be highly strained, which highlights the **opportunity to expansion** of the industry in Abbotsford thanks to relatively lower costs and **accessibility**. The group expressed that the **revitalization of downtown Abbotsford** and events like **Jam in Jubilee** are fundamental to building community in Abbotsford, of which filmmakers are a part.

Like other creative and cultural sectors in Abbotsford, filmmakers note **resources, as well as awareness and accessibility, as key requirements** to develop and grow. Participants expressed a wish to see more public access to education and equipment for filmmaking, particularly for underprivileged youth in Abbotsford, as well as the opportunity to partner with the City to share filmmaking activity on online City platforms. There is also concern regarding the red tape and **high cost associated with permitting processes** and insurance, discouraging most independent and low-budget filmmakers to apply for permits. Participants also noted difficulty in finding affordable and **rentable space to host screenings**, despite support for filmmakers within the local community. Filmmakers would like to see the development of **financial grants**, partnership with the City, access to space to host community events, and access to independent film permits as the City considers its cultural strategy going forward.

Participants made several mentions of notable institutions that have partnered with filmmakers in Abbotsford, highlighting the **value of collaboration and cross-sectoral support** throughout the City: W J Mouat Secondary School; Abbotsford School District, Abbotsford Arts Council; Kariton Art Gallery; UFV’s Fine Arts Department, and; CIVL Radio (Fraser Valley Community Radio). Participants also reflected on the value of Abbotsford’s music community, and the immense opportunity for **community building** in Abbotsford through events such as Jam in Jubilee.

**When asked what filmmakers would like to see...**

“The filmmaking community would love the opportunity to partner with the City to host outdoor screenings at Mill Lake for instance, like other municipalities have done with much success.”

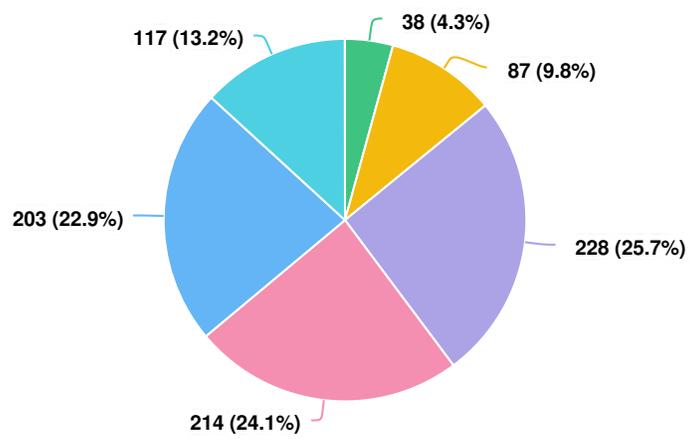
Abbotsford Filmmakers

# **City of Abbotsford Culture Strategic Plan**

## **Public Survey Results**

### **Appendix F**

# Age Range



● 19-24 ● 25-36 ● 37-49 ● 50-65 ● 65 and over

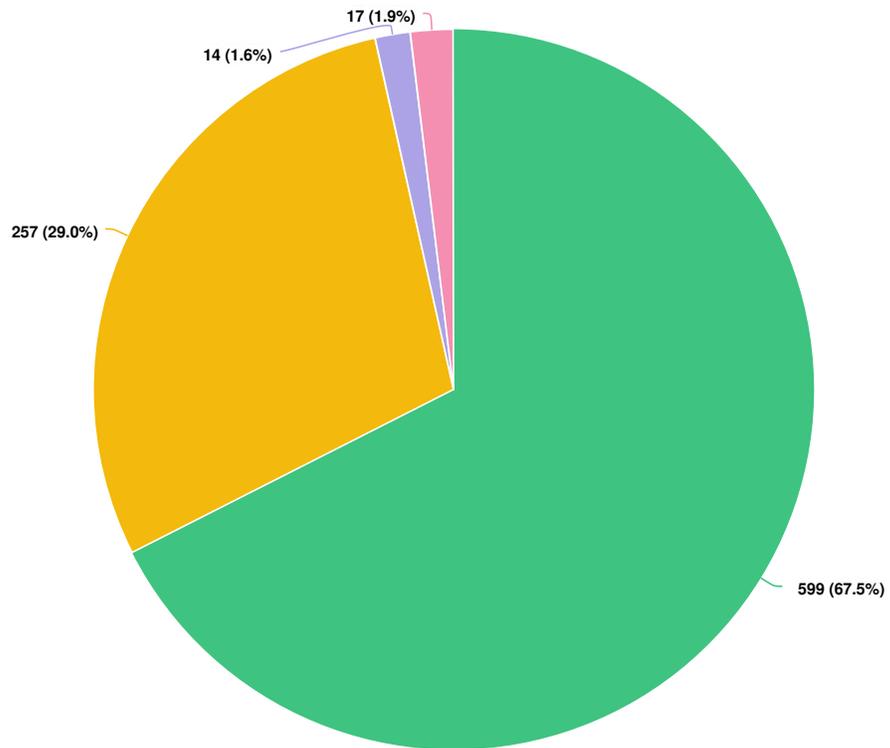
### Question options

● Under 18

Optional question (887 response(s), 11 skipped)

Question type: Dropdown Question

# Gender



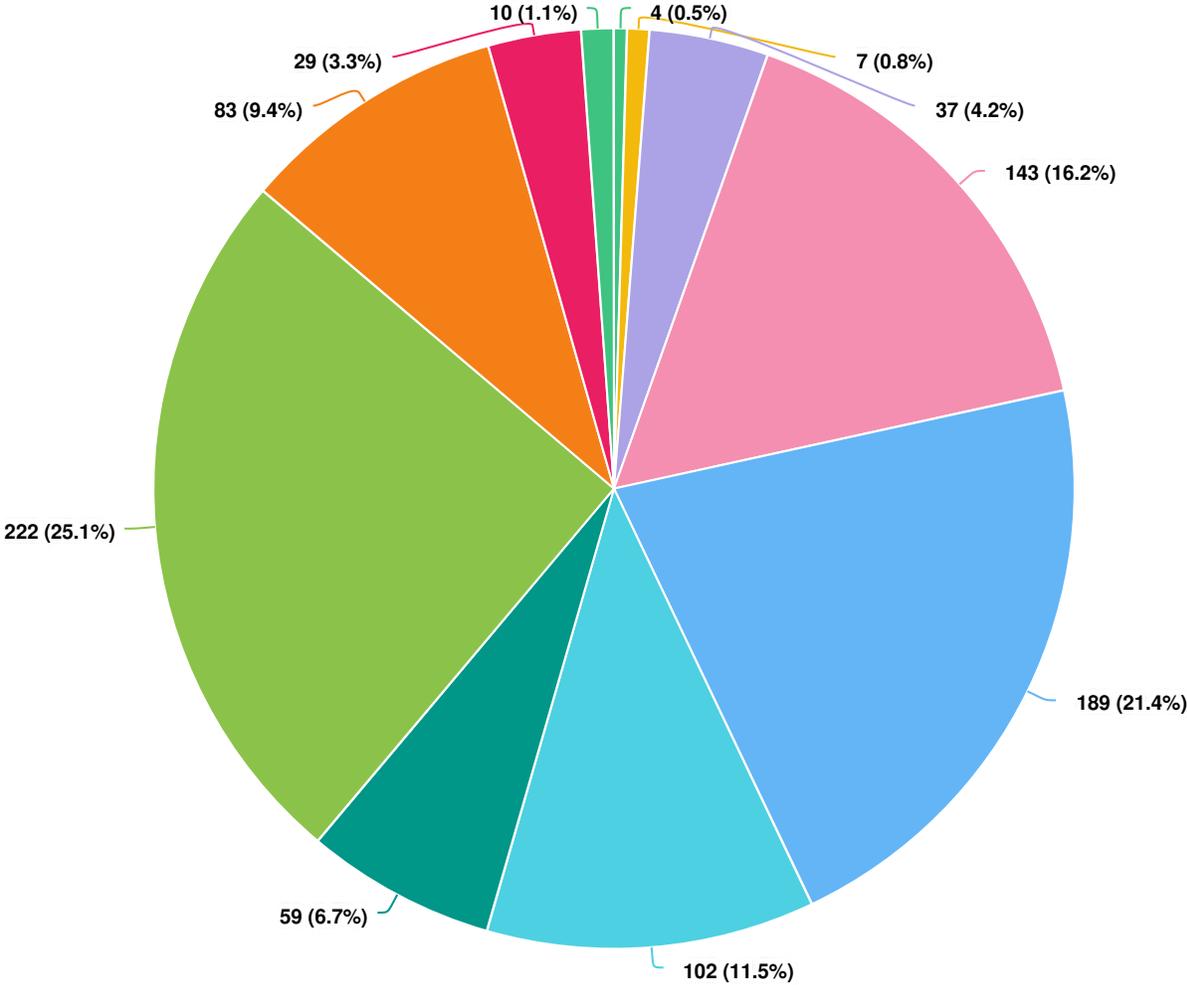
## Question options

- Female
- Male
- Gender-nonconforming
- Prefer not to answer

Optional question (887 response(s), 11 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# Highest Level of Education



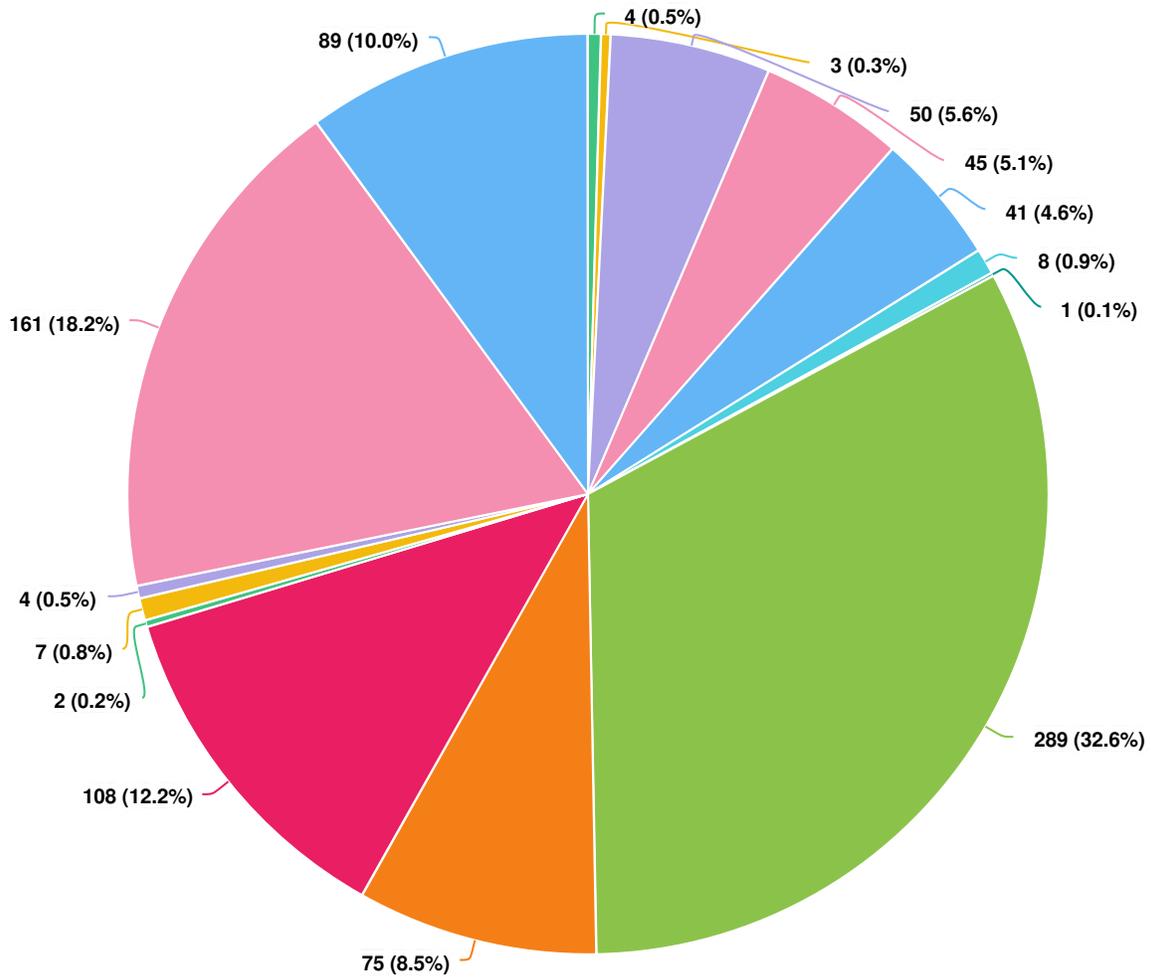
**Question options**

- No schooling completed
 ● Eighth (8th) Grade
● Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent
 ● Some college credit, no degree
● Trade/technical/vocational training
- Associate degree
 ● Bachelor's degree
● Master's degree
● Professional degree
● Doctorate degree

Optional question (885 response(s), 13 skipped)

Question type: Dropdown Question

# Ethnic origin/background



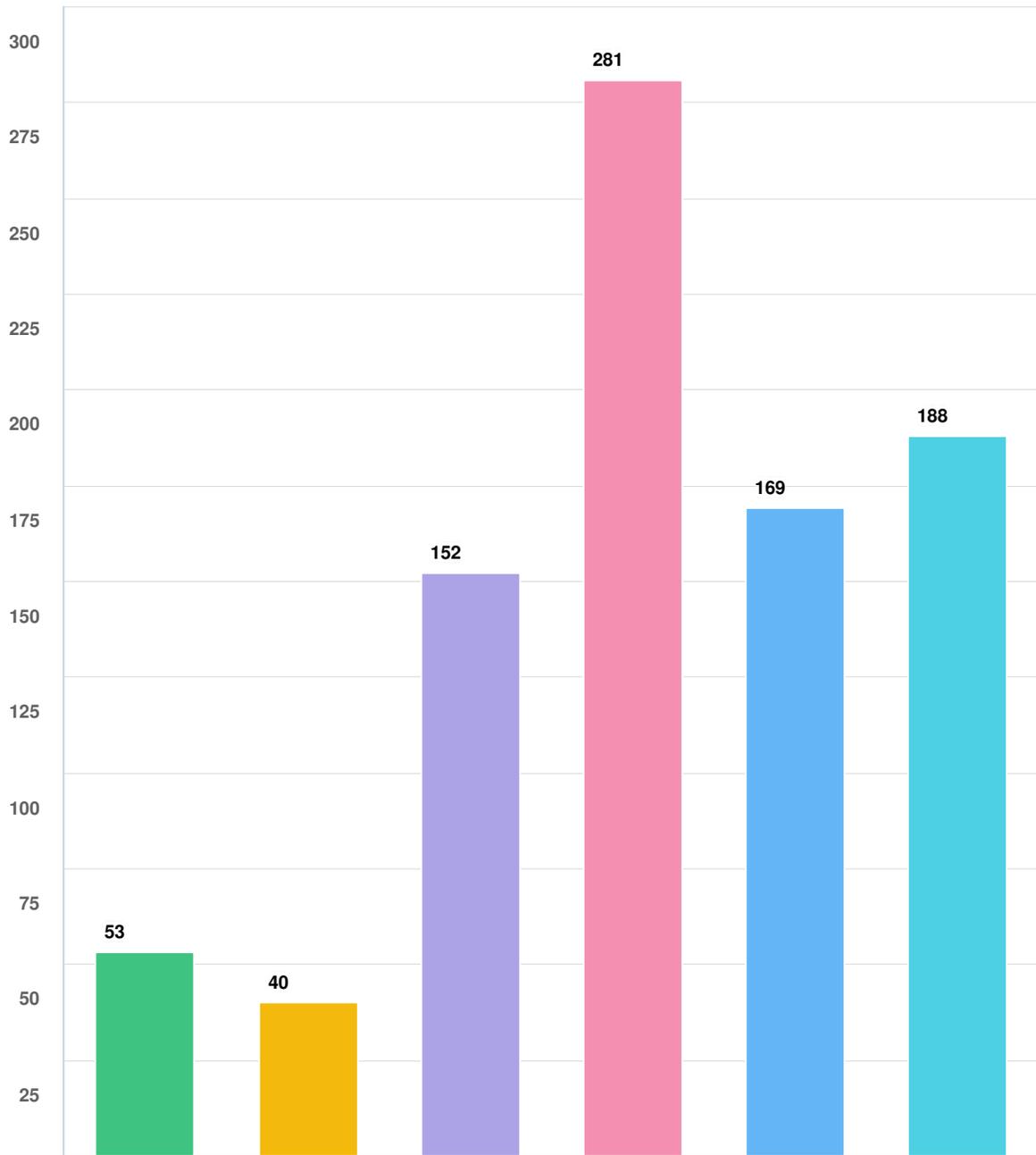
## Question options

- Caribbean
 ● Central and West African
 ● East and Southeast Asian
 ● Eastern European
 ● Indigenous Peoples
- Latin, Central and South American
 ● North African
 ● North American
 ● Northern European
 ● South Asian
- Southern and East African
 ● Southern European
 ● West Central Asian and Middle Eastern
 ● West European
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (887 response(s), 11 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# Annual Household Income



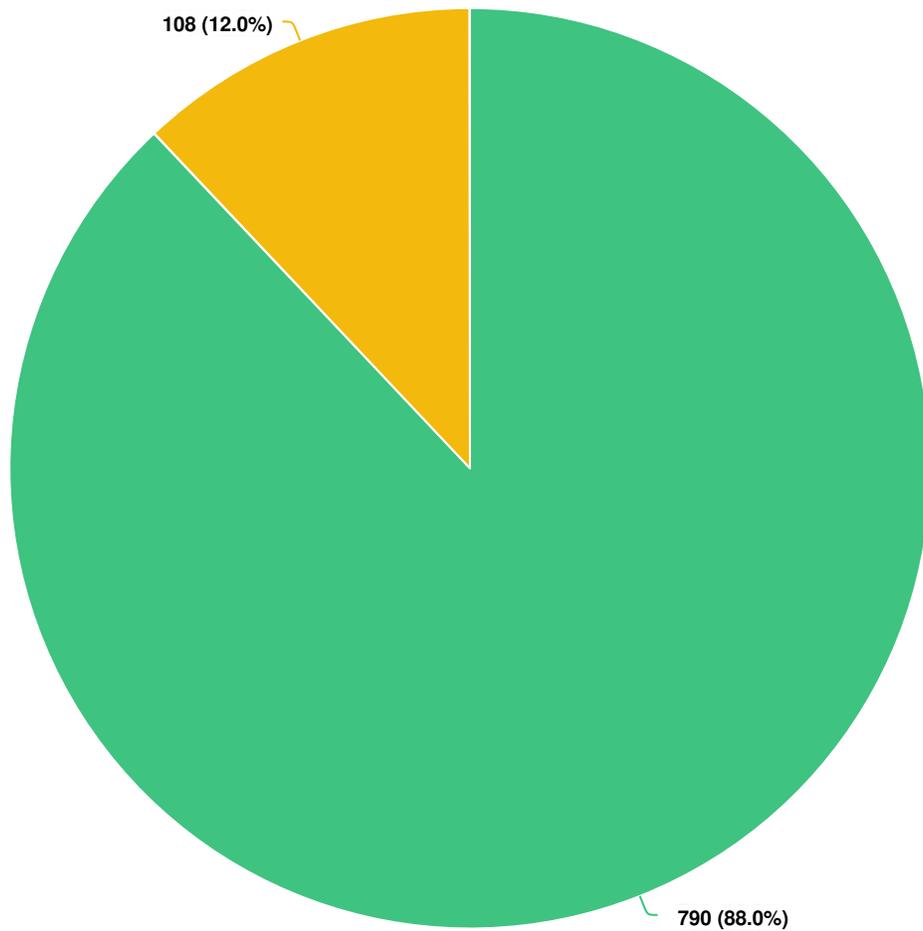
### Question options

- <\$15,000
- \$15,001 - \$25,000
- \$25,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$100,000
- >\$101,000
- Prefer not to say

Optional question (883 response(s), 15 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

## Do you live in Abbotsford?



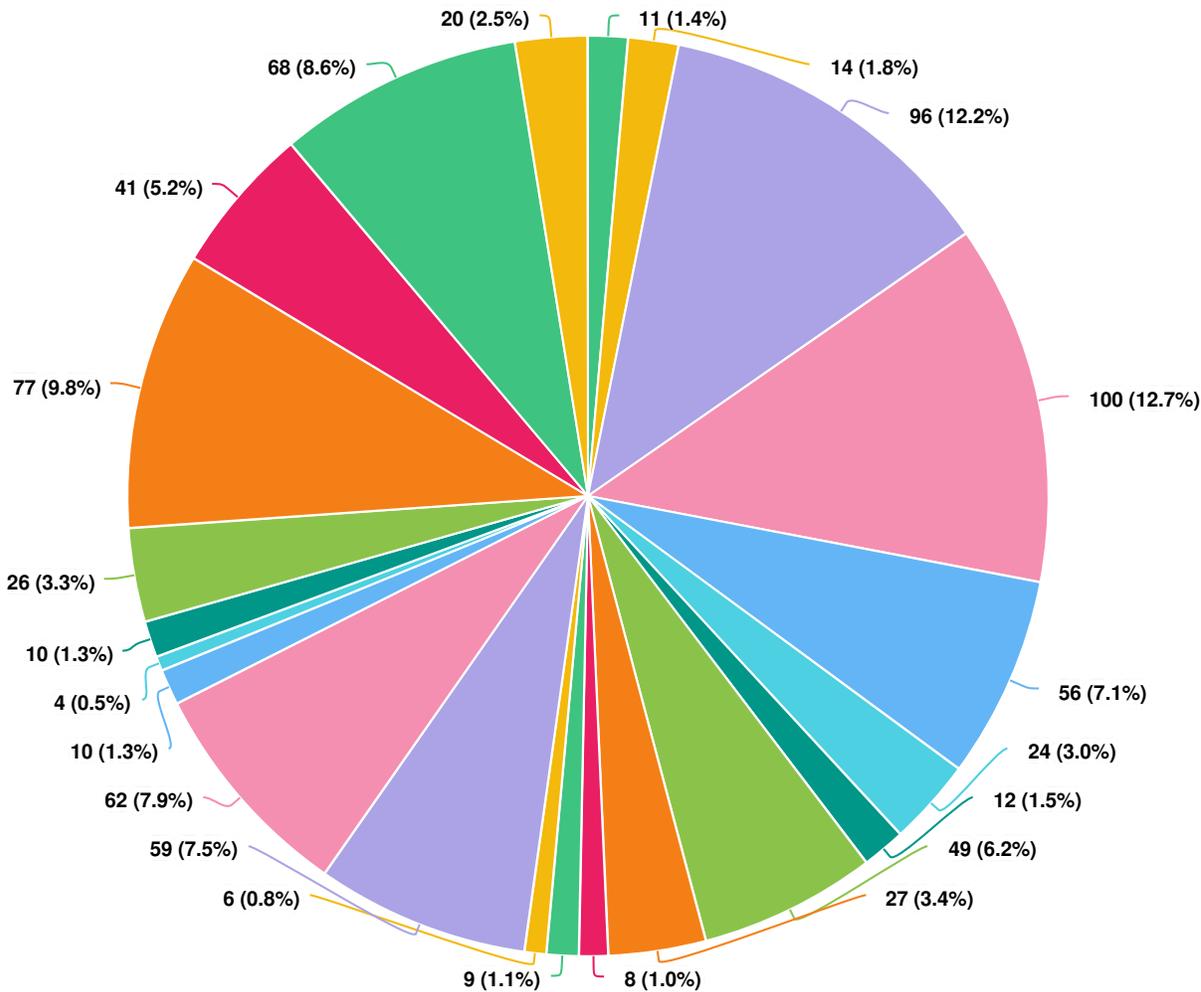
### Question options

- Yes
- No

Mandatory Question (898 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

# Please indicate which neighbourhood you live in



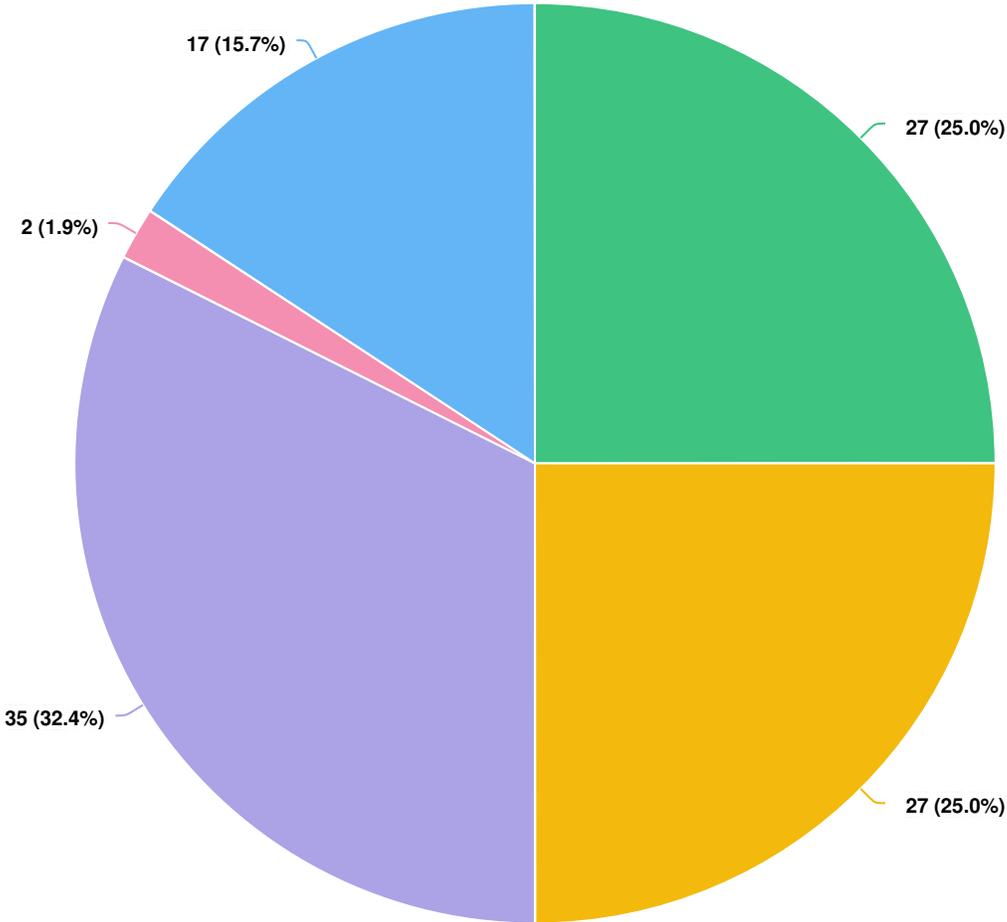
**Question options**

- Aberdeen    Bradner-Mt. Lehman    City Centre    Clearbrook    Townline    Fairfield    Matsqui Prairie
- Clayburn    South Clearbrook    South Poplar    Sumas Mountain    Sumas Prairie    Whatcom
- Historic Downtown    UDistrict    Hazelwood    Peardonville    West Abbotsford    Immel/ McMillan
- McKee    Marshall/McCallum    Sumas Way

Optional question (789 response(s), 109 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# Please indicate which municipality you live in



**Question options**

- Chilliwack
- Langley
- Mission
- Maple Ridge
- Other (please specify)

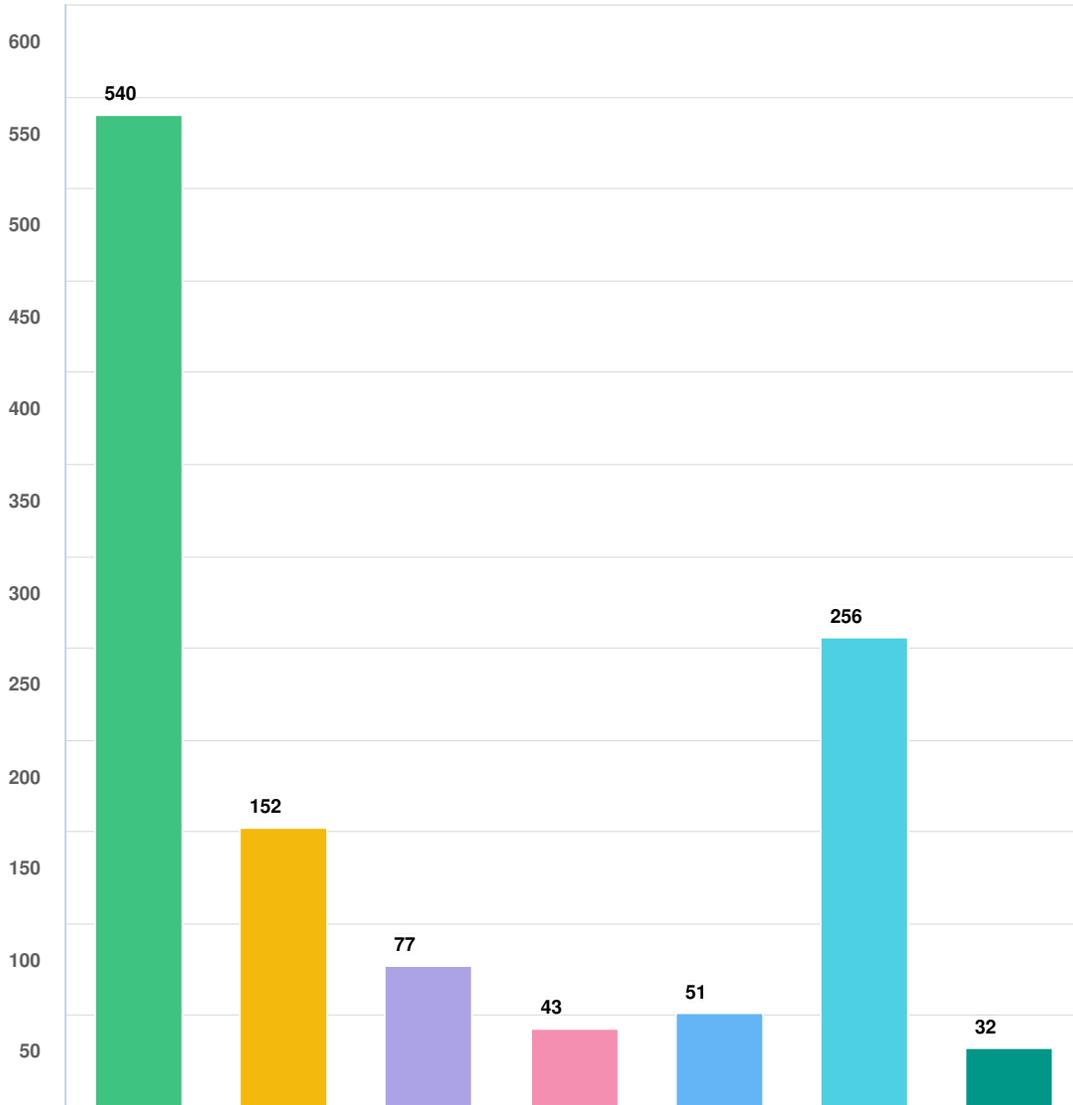
Optional question (108 response(s), 790 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# How do you engage in arts, culture and heritage in Abbotsford?

(please select all that apply).

If you choose "None of the above", please skip to question #11.



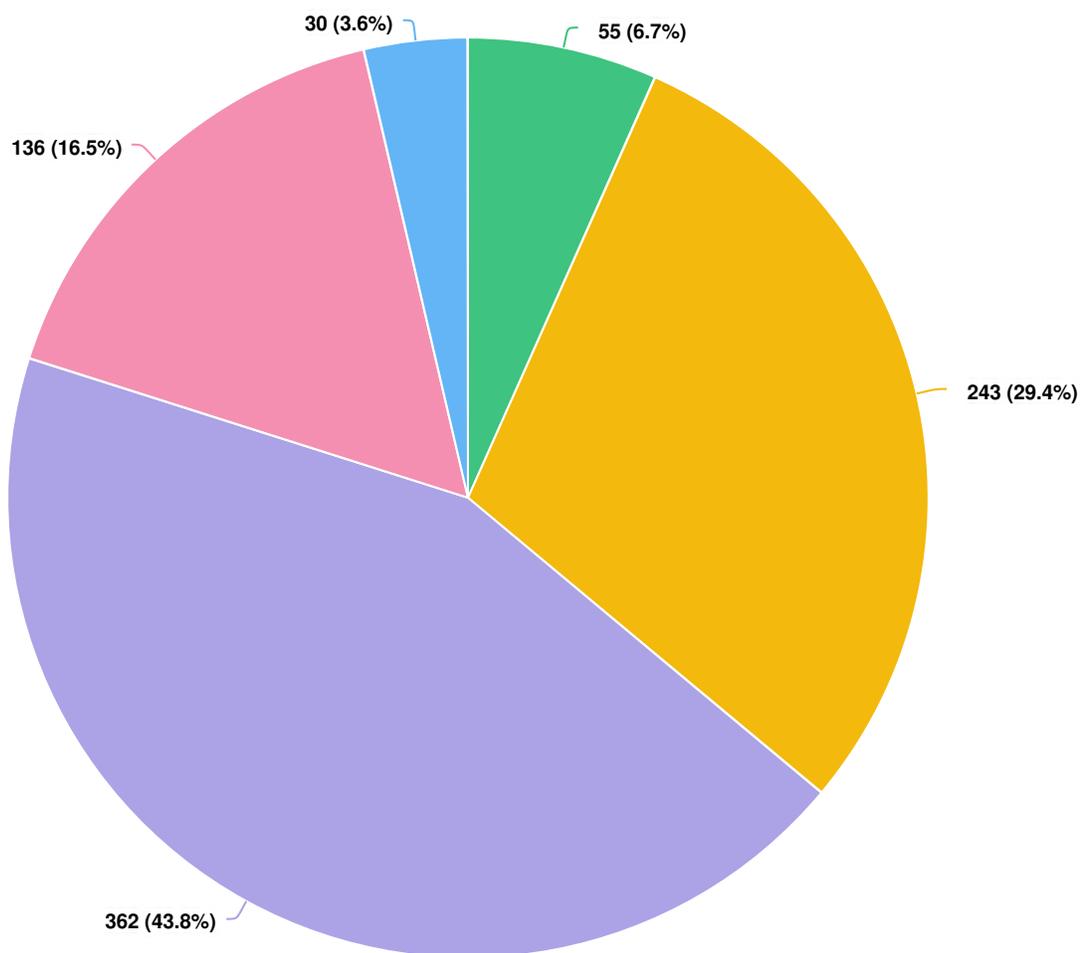
## Question options

- I attend and/or participate in cultural events, programs and/or classes
- I volunteer in the cultural sector (e.g. at galleries, festivals, cultural celebrations, concerts etc.)
- I work in the cultural sector - either in an organization in the cultural sector or as an artist/creator
- I represent a non-arts, culture or heritage specific not-for-profit organization
- I am a City of Abbotsford staff member
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (886 response(s), 12 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# How satisfied are you with the current arts, culture and heritage services offered by the City of Abbotsford?



## Question options

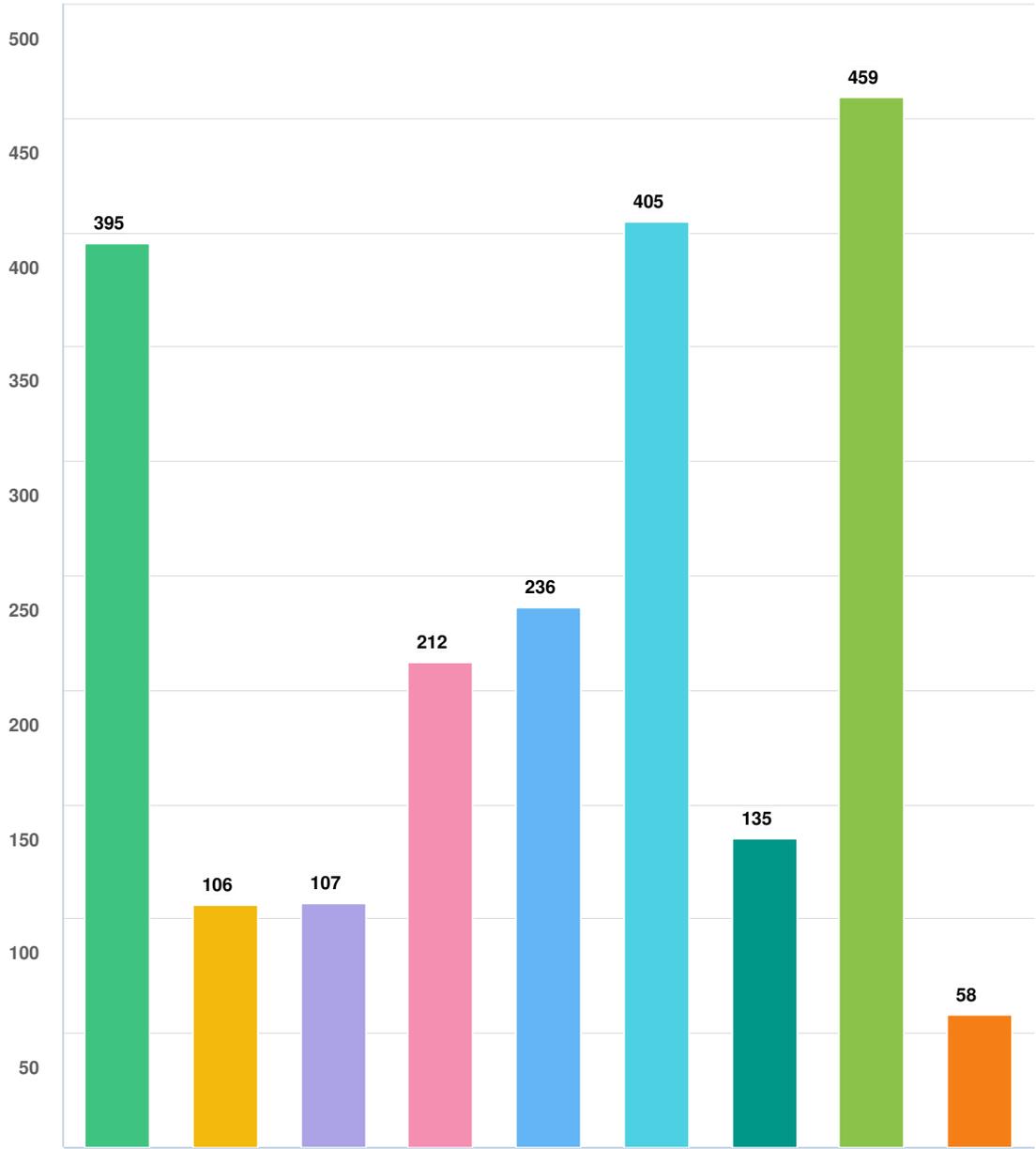
Very satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Optional question (826 response(s), 72 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# How do you typically find out about arts events, activities and amenities in Abbotsford?

(please select all that apply)



**Question options**

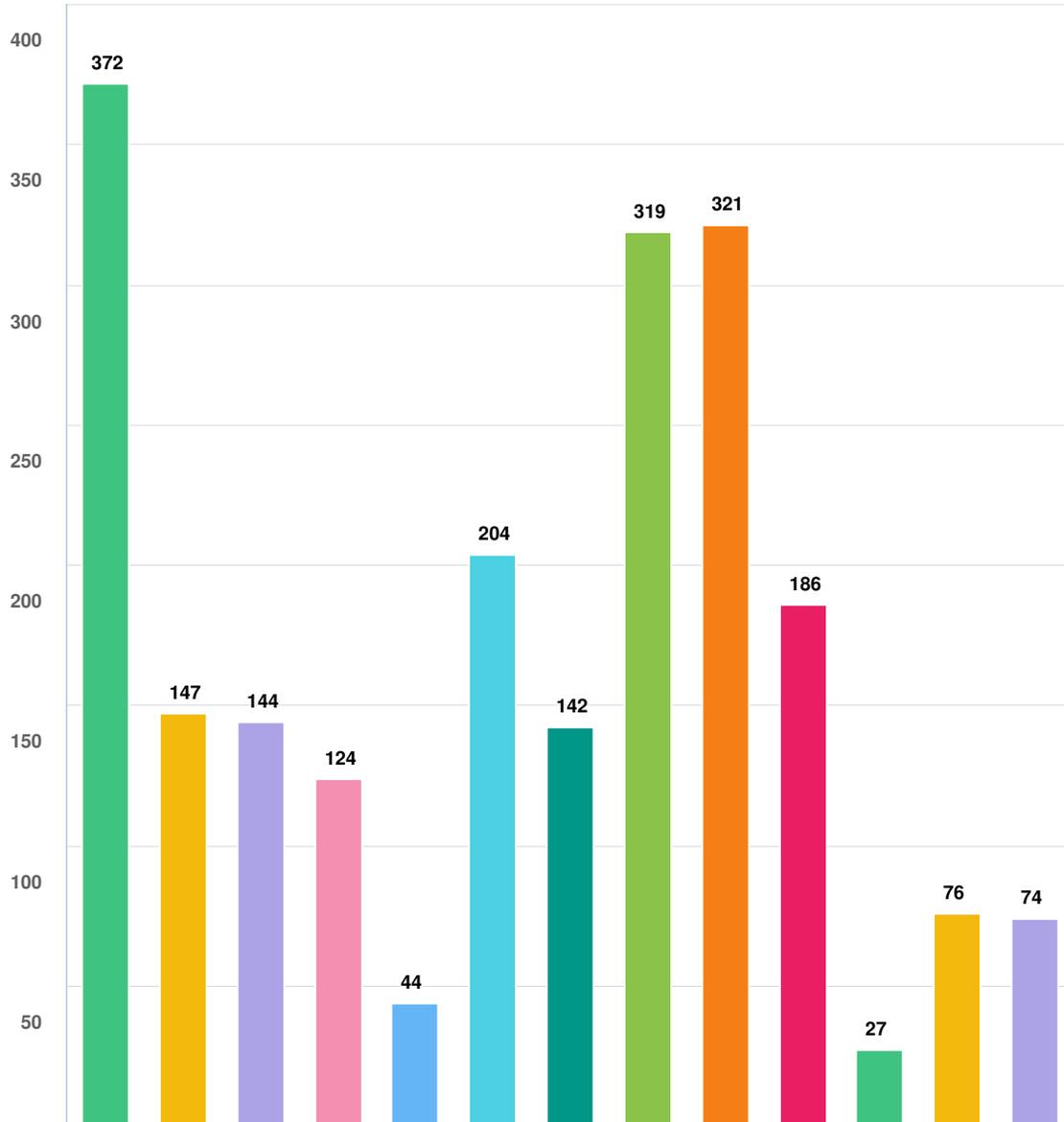
- Abbotsford newspaper
- Radio
- Other local news sources
- Parks, Recreation and Culture Guide
- City-led social media
- External social media
- Other websites
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (888 response(s), 10 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What arts, cultural or heritage experiences have you taken part of in the last year?

## Places (please select all that apply)



### Question options

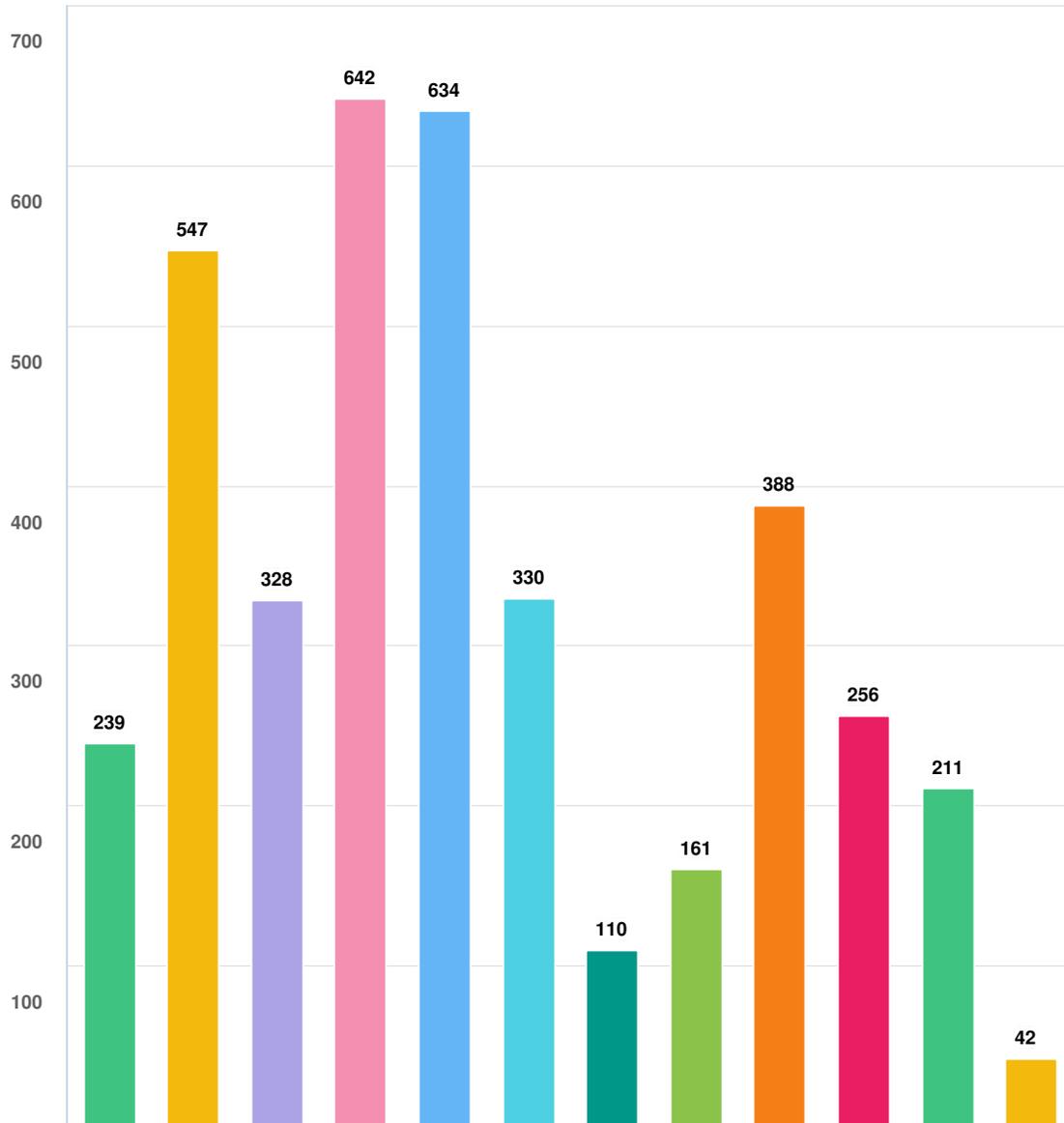
- The Reach Gallery Museum
- The Gur Sikh Temple and Sikh Heritage Museum
- Trethewey House Heritage Site
- Mennonite Heritage Museum
- Abbotsford Sports Hall of Fame
- Clayburn Village Historic Conservation Area
- Kariton Art Gallery & Boutique
- Abbotsford Arts Centre
- Abbotsford Centre
- Matsqui Centennial Auditorium
- Metzger Collection
- S'ELIYEMETAXWTEXW Art Gallery (University of the Fraser Valley)
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (807 response(s), 91 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What arts, cultural or heritage experiences have you taken part of in the last year?

## Experiences (please select all that apply)



### Question options

- Visited a winery
 ● Listened to live music
 ● Attended a friend or family member's recital or performance
- Went to the movies
 ● Visited a market
 ● Visited a craft brewery
 ● Performed in an activity (music, dance, comedy, etc)
- Attended a comedy event
 ● Visited a public garden
 ● Attended a live theatre performance
- Attended a cultural event at a religious institution
 ● Other (please specify)

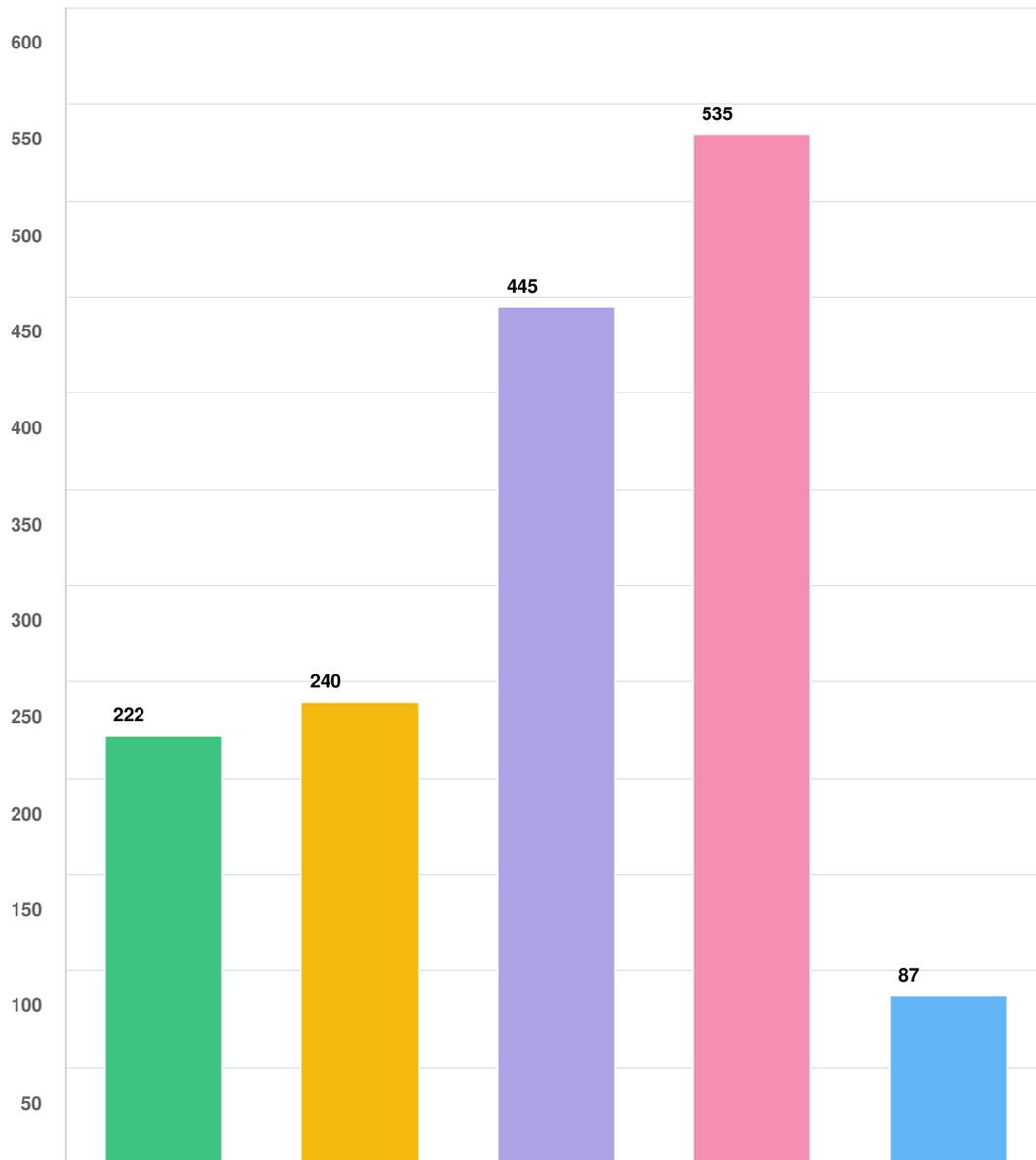
Optional question (877 response(s), 21 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What arts, cultural or heritage experiences have you taken part of in the last year?

## Events/Festivals

(please select all that apply)



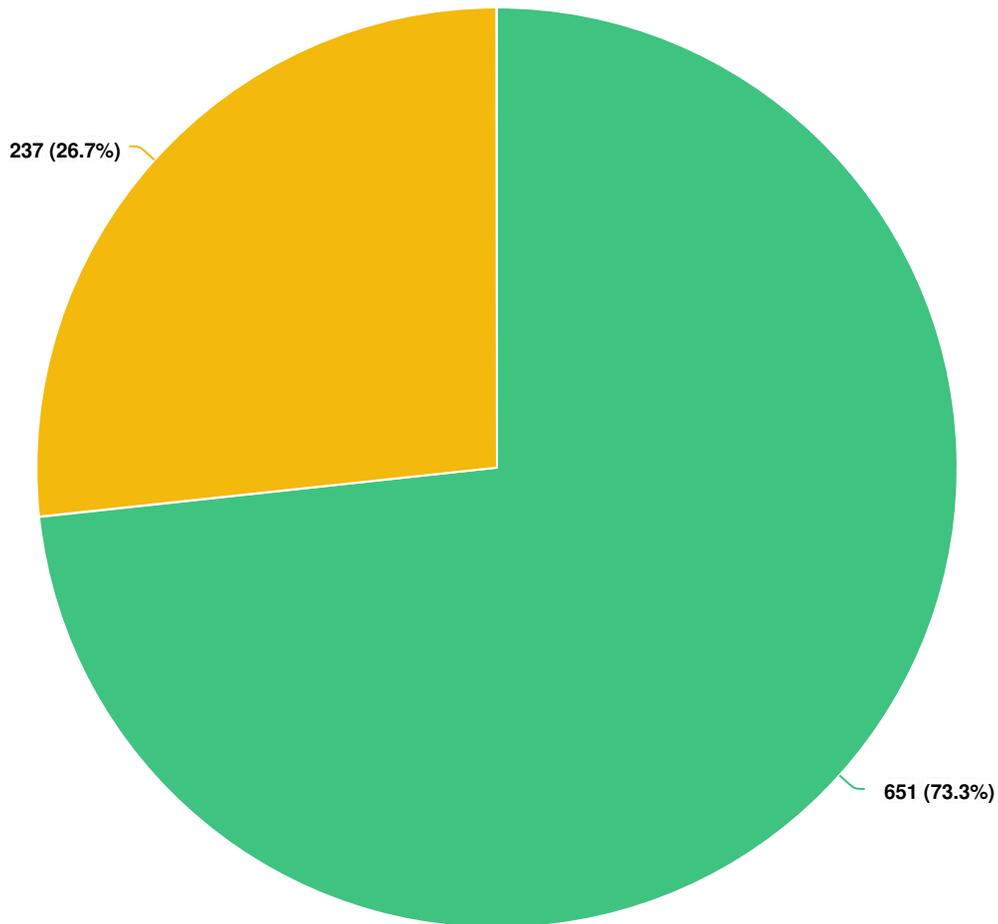
### Question options

- Jam in Jubilee
- Mill Lake Music Concert Series
- Abbotsford Berry Festival
- Canada Day
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (739 response(s), 159 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

## Do you engage in cultural activities outside the City of Abbotsford?



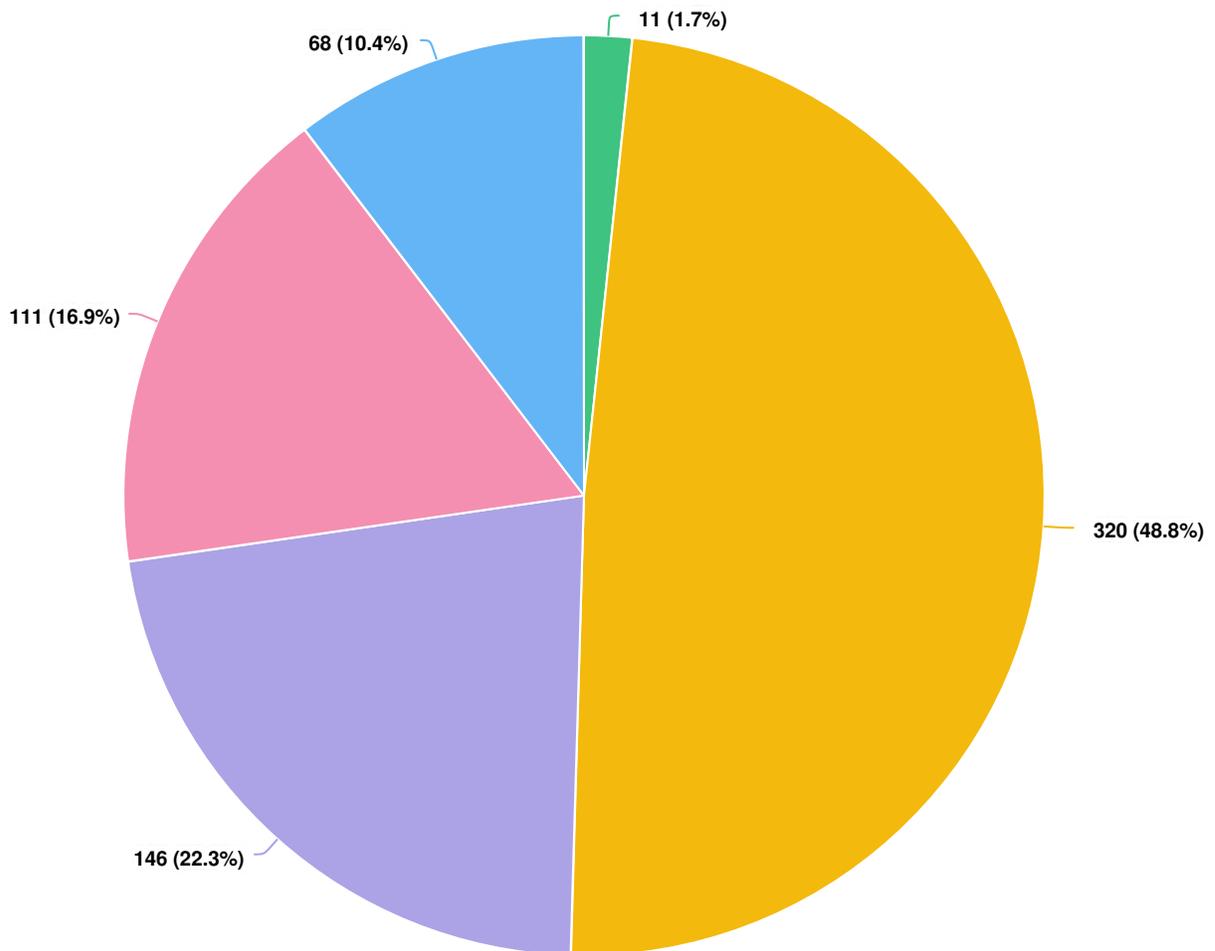
### Question options

Yes  No

Optional question (888 response(s), 10 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

## Roughly what percentage of your total spending on culture is spent on cultural activities outside the City of Abbotsford?



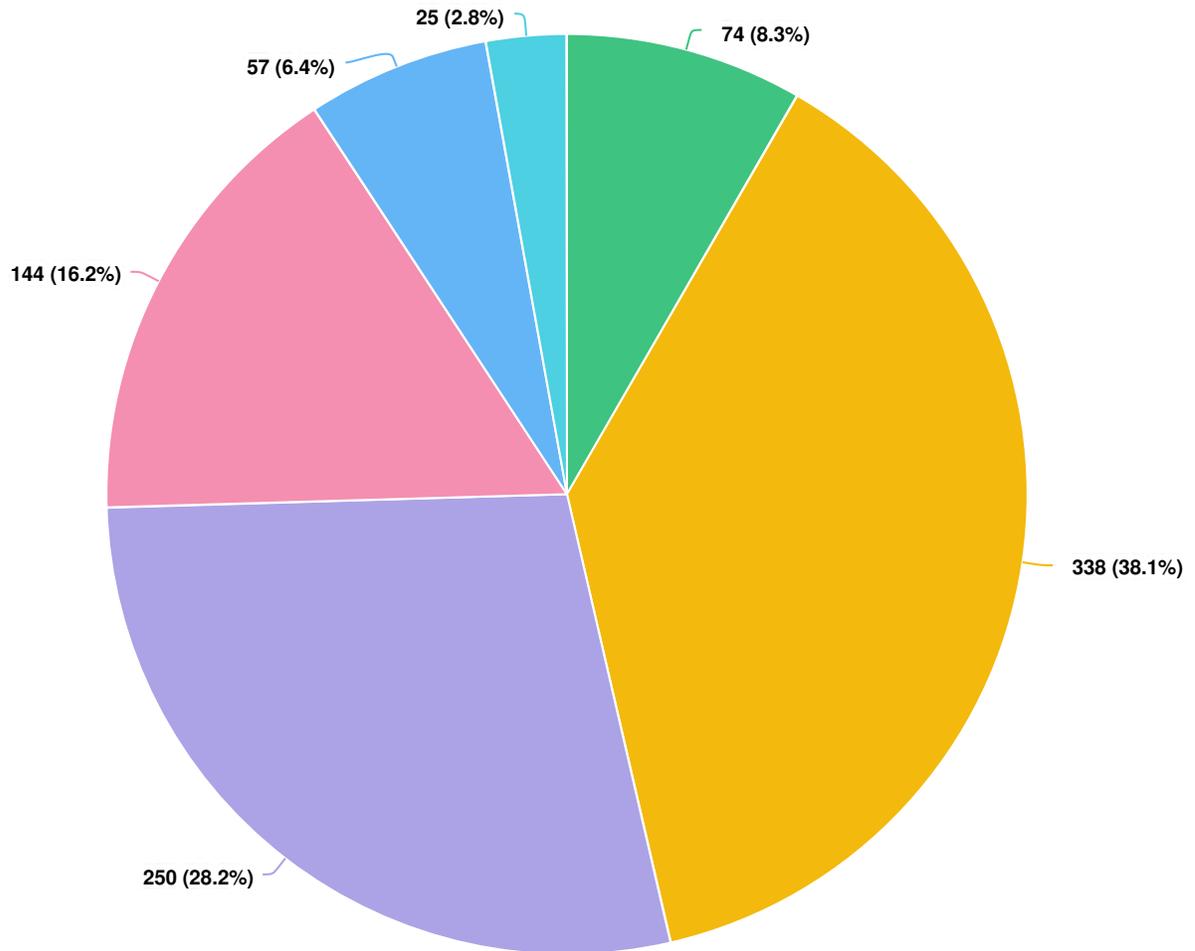
### Question options

0% 0-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75-100%

Optional question (656 response(s), 242 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# Roughly how much do you as a family unit spend on arts, cultural or heritage activities per month in Abbotsford?



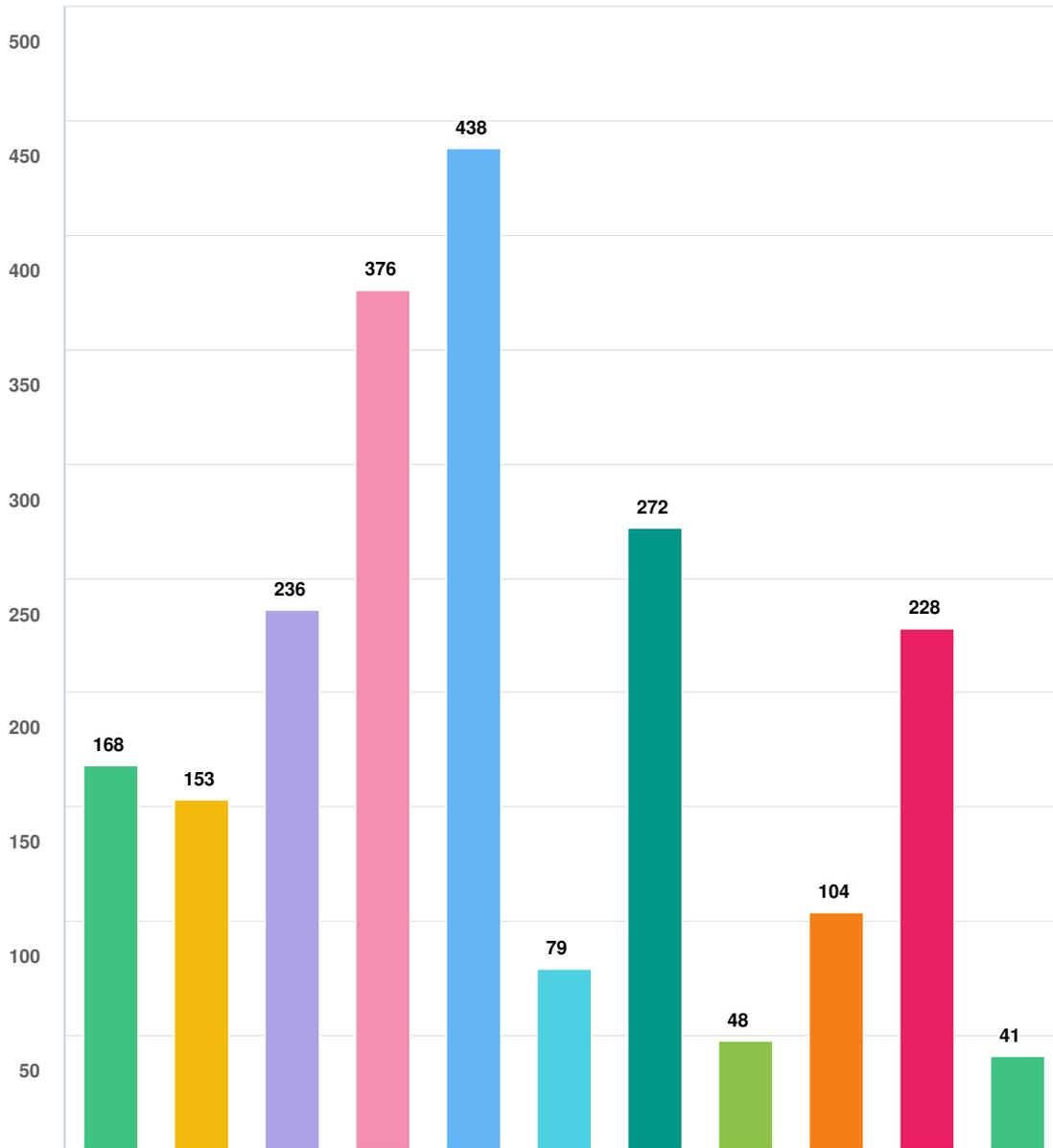
## Question options

- \$0
- Less than \$25
- \$25-50
- \$50-\$100
- \$100-\$250
- over \$250

Optional question (888 response(s), 10 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

# What challenges or barriers have you experienced in accessing arts or culture in Abbotsford, if any? (please select all that apply)



## Question options

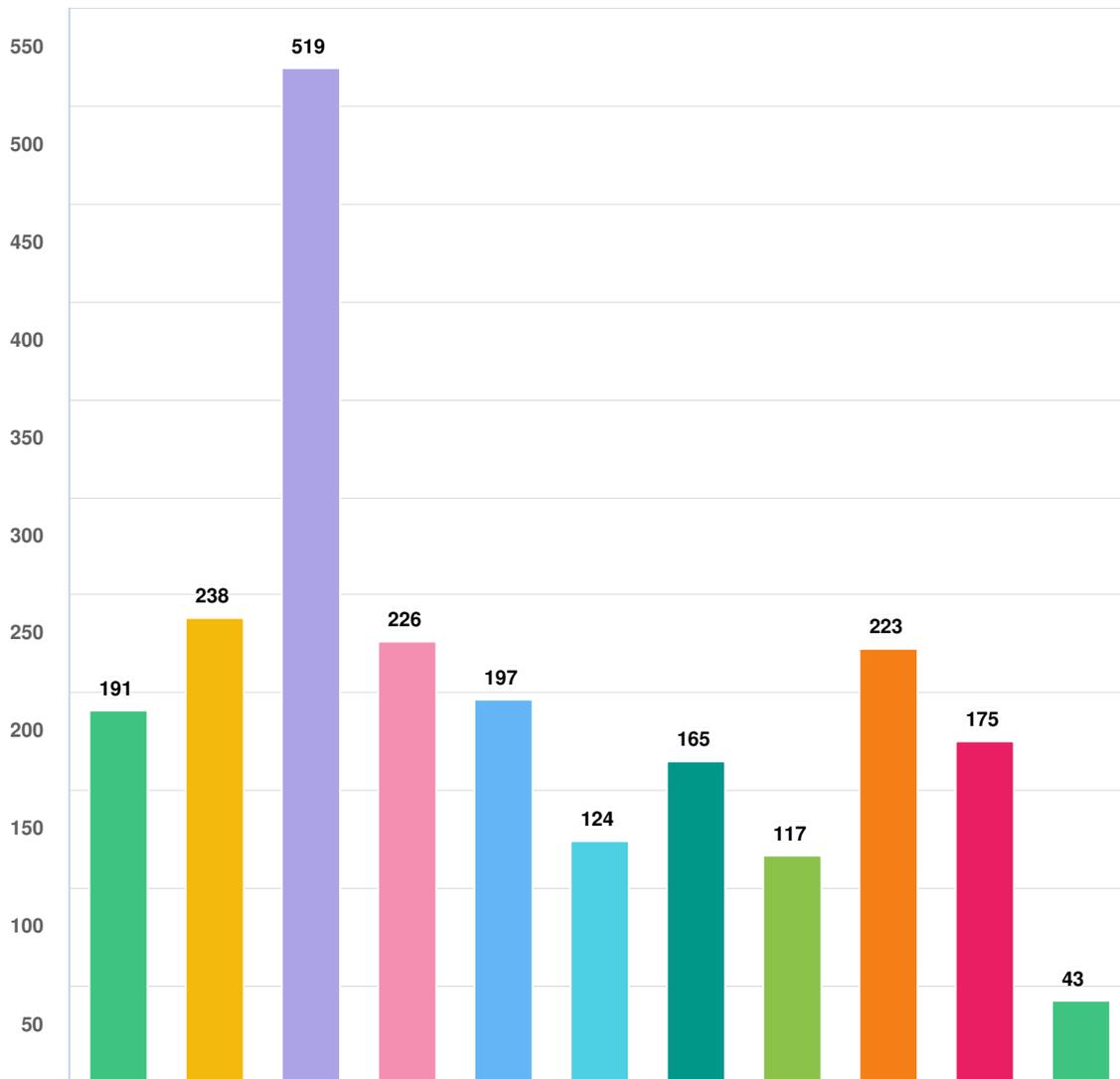
- Transportation    ● Location    ● Cost    ● Lack of variety/quality    ● Awareness
- Feeling uncomfortable, unwelcome or unsafe    ● Scheduling conflicts    ● Language    ● I have none
- A lack of things that are important to me culturally    ● Other (please specify)

Optional question (888 response(s), 10 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What do you think the City of Abbotsford should prioritize in developing the Culture Strategic Plan?

(please select your top 3)



## Question options

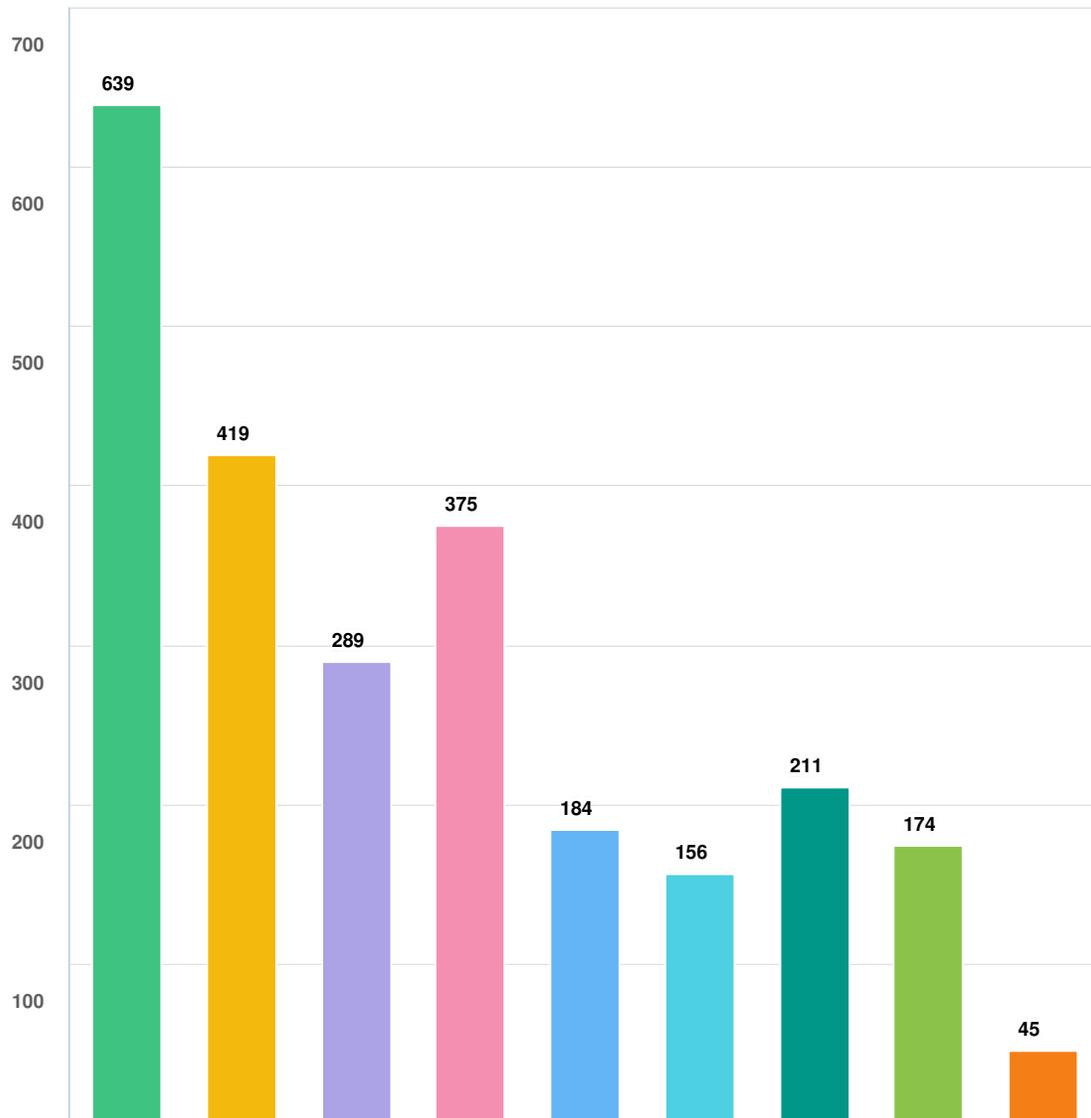
- New and/or improved arts spaces
- Ensuring arts and culture-based activities are inclusive and accessible to the broadest range of participants
- More free and accessible public events (e.g. festivals)
- Activities that engage the community in the cultural heritage of diverse groups
- Increased funding for local arts and cultural organizations
- Increase City funding for culture
- Youth-focused arts programming
- Indigenous arts programs and opportunities
- Improved marketing for greater awareness
- Public art
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (883 response(s), 15 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What means do you think the City of Abbotsford should use to improve awareness of arts, culture and heritage events?

(please select all that apply)



## Question options

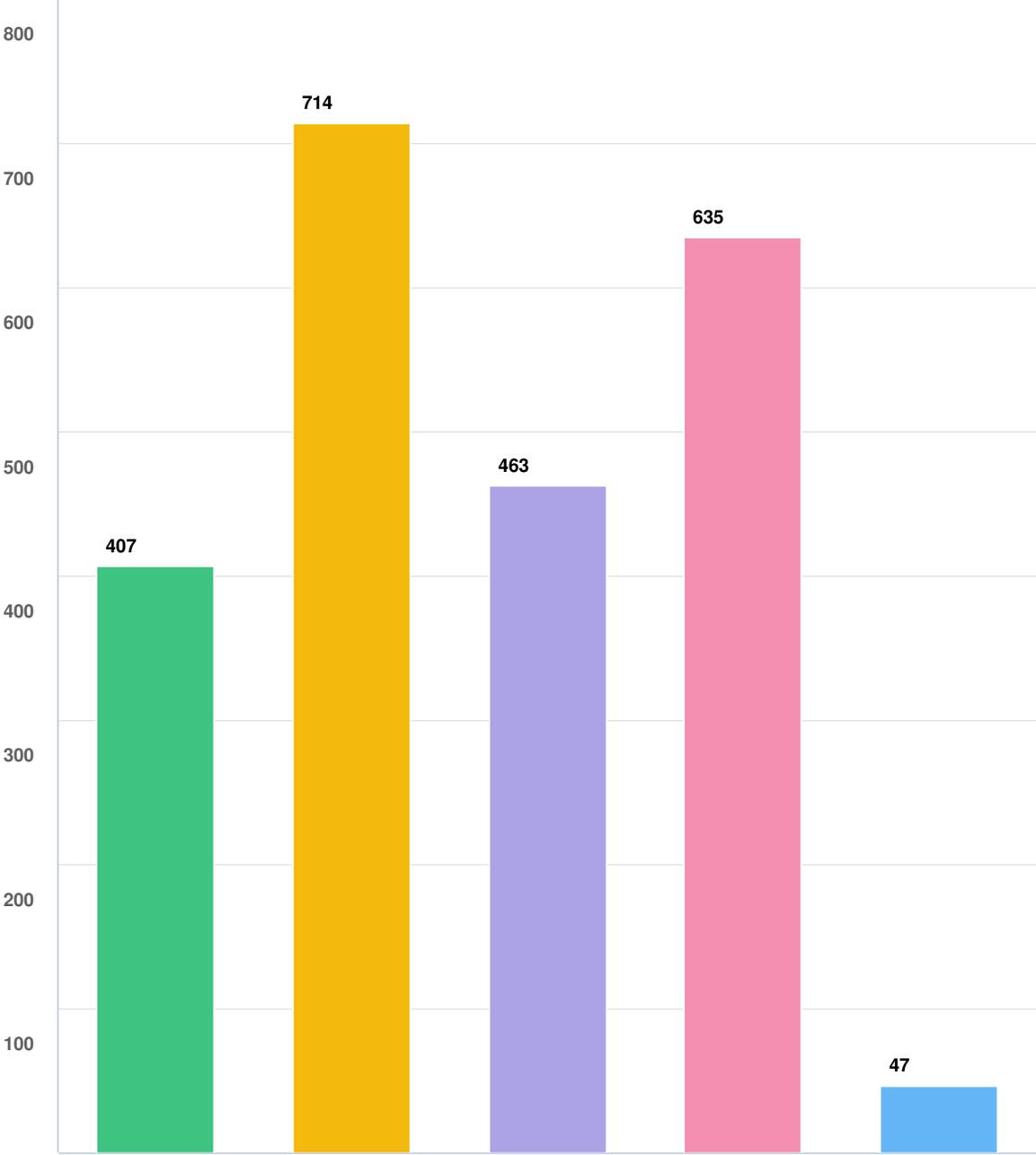
- More social media-based advertising
- Signage visible (e.g. for heritage sites or art walks)
- More stories/advertising in local newspaper
- Increase awareness of centralized online website beyond the Parks, Recreation & Culture guide
- More stories/advertising on television throughout the Lower Mainland
- More stories/advertising on the radio
- Monthly newsletter from the City
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (879 response(s), 19 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

# What do you believe is the most important positive impact of culture for the City of Abbotsford?

(please check all that apply)



**Question options**

- People can celebrate their own culture and heritage
- It brings people together
- It's good for the local economy
- It makes Abbotsford more vibrant
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (883 response(s), 15 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

## Public Survey Comments

<p>Please make mention of Sikhs in the cultural guide and how the local Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) provides free meals open to everyone from morning to night</p>
<p>:)</p>
<p>A Caribbean festival or event would be great</p>
<p>A few questions back I wanted to add a third option but my bad, the art of our youth is very important as well as remembering the gifts our ancestors have left us. While we are experiencing this isolation I am learning too that Pioneer crafts are returning to the front for those looking for things to do. Perhaps we could feature men &amp; women who work with their hands in wood carvers,quilters, basket weaving or any other hand made gifts from other cultures and perhaps creating things with objects at hand ie punk art.</p>
<p>A good job is being done</p>
<p>A news letter could have a historical section. On buildings, people, ethnic groups etc.</p>
<p>Abbotsford has to look forward. It seems that the only events that Abbotsford celebrates or funds are for and older or less alternative crowd. It needs to embrace the future. Allow events that were once considered taboo to come here. It is not the 50's anymore. We have young people and middle agers alike that are bored with what Abby has to offer. Everything is so monitored by Council's values or church values. Let people be people.</p>
<p>Abbotsford is a city big enough to have a theme park of it's own.</p>
<p>Abbotsford lacks resources for asian communities, whenever myself and family go to Langley and beyond we look forward to going to asian grocery stores we don't have one in Abbotsford, it makes me think it's challenging for asians to live here if they have to travel out of town to buy what they need. And everyone else misses out on the fun and learn experience you have in those grocery stores.</p>
<p>Abbotsford needs more places for the arts and music scene in Abbotsford. The artists want to share their work/music but there are very few appropriate places for this to happen. In addition, there needs to be more support from the City of Abbotsford for the local music scene. If the city provided more spaces for bands to play, Abbotsford and Fraser Valley artists would play more shows here instead of playing in Vancouver. Abbotsford could become a hub for music in the Lower Mainland if there were more venues and space because the talent already exists here.</p>
<p>Abbotsford needs to create a cultural centre like to the centre in Chilliwack, where citizens have opportunity to learn to create art. In particular, please a pottery studio and visual art studio!</p>

Abbotsford needs to have a black box theatre, as well as permanent outdoor venue ie. bandstand at Mill Lake (similar to what was proposed for Jubilee) This would be good for music and performing Arts. ie. Calgary on Bow Island can have Shakespeare in the park. Also, need to utilize space we have ie. At City Hall where the fountains are on the north side - could be used as a performing area in the summer months. Have food trucks accessible between City Hall and Library as well as at Mill Lake. Improve the walkability of Mill Lake - lighting in the evening. At Christmas decorate with Christmas Lights ie. Lafarge in Coquitlam - seek out sponsorship

Abbotsford needs to not focus on BIG events, just more places where events of different kinds can take place on a regular basis.

Abby seems more divided than united by its different communities and has the feel of a generic bedroom community with no community pride. I would like to see banners celebrating different neighborhoods and history; stronger conservation of the very few heritage buildings left here; a rainbow crosswalk; bilingual city ads acknowledging the large Indian community; more cross-cultural activities; plain-language legal ads; more bike lanes; fewer sirens. The lack of letters to the editor in our poor newspaper gives City Council a free reign and no voice for the residents.

Again stop wasting money

Always a need for more \$. Support your local talent and organizations.

An easily accessible and important development would be in more independent and foreign film. There is a severe lack of anything other than huge blockbuster movies that don't serve as much of an artistic or cultural significance. It is important for people to go outside of their comfort zone when it comes to the arts, and people can engage in many different cultures through foreign films, there is also plenty of independent Canadian films that are made every year that are looked over that could contribute.

Anything that brings people from all walks of life together to enjoy our beautiful city and its surroundings would be very welcome!!

As a new resident, I'm excited to learn the city is pursuing this initiative!

Be great for the city to help and support the Abbotsford Film Festival. We'll be have our second edition this summer (and one a year plus other events) and there is such an indie film scene in Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley, what with Vancouver so close too, so there's a real opportunity for the festival to grow.

Be more diverse than East Indian and Caucasian.

Belonging is key, when people FEEL like they are valued in the community they attend more events and invest in their home communities

Better advertising on social media about the fun at past events and invitations to new ones.
Better facilities are long overdue.
Big Cinemovies, project and other movies in French, German (international). Many restaurants close, similar to Nelson. Need Go carts, karaoke, family and discotec for the younger and older people (dance) no alcohol, no drugs to enter. Park for especio for music, opera, sinfanica the sunday free for family.
Black Connections and similar groups should be given funding/grants! They have held some amazing and informative block parties at the Reach to bring the black community and others together.
Bring it on, let Abbotsford shine with everything it has, I spend alot of my summers in the City of Vancouver for car free days and various festivals I would much prefer to spend it and spend my money in my own backyard and community.
Can we add more LGBTQ friendly events?
Can't wait to see what you've got planned!! I love living in Abbotsford!!
Celebrate more culture events which get together all religions people at same place to know each other's religion.....
City makes community events difficult (contracts, etc). It would be great if the partnered in the true sense of the word - make outdoor spaces free to use if it is a free community event.
Community programs such as: swimming and other activities should be free for locals for least amount of money and ABBOTSFORD needs more culture because I see very less friendly people.
Consider other cultures and heritages aside from the East Indian and aboriginal cultures. Slowly b surely Abbotsford is being populated by other cultures and requires more awareness and outward acceptance in terms of events and so on.
Considering the fact that the Reach Gallery/Museum is the primary cultural institution in this City, continue to fund it and/or increase its funding.
Continue getting the word out about the culture within Abbotsford in a clear voice that gets people's attention. Keep up the efforts you are making!
Continue with this outreach effort, it's a good idea. :o)
Create more field trips for schools

"Cultural Events are so important and uplifting. We need more possitive things in our lives collectively. "
Culture brings joy and happiness to a lot of people, it makes them be you they are and it is ver important to preserve it.
Culture is important. It makes us wiser which makes us kinder. Economic gains will follow engagement. This is a good and important effort
Despite the best efforts of the organizers to have inclusive cultural events, a lot of times cultural events don't feel inclusive because participants outside of these cultures don't want to integrate into a specific culture and tend to avoid these. As much as we are celebrating where everyone comes from, a more important direction would be to celebrate where we are, get the people together outside of religion or sects. Not everyone has these cultures, though everyone has this community. A patriotism to the community to me is more important than celebrating someone else's style.
If I had to suggest something that I feel would bring together the community, it would be to offer community food events where the different cultures get together and offer people a chance to share a culture-varied meal with each other. I would love to be able to try unique foods from all over the world on one plate.
Different cultures and traditions should be celebrated so that no one feels neglected and even can get a chance to know about other cultures .
Different food trucks!
Do not make the mistakes Surrey and Richmond have by only focusing on one culture because they are exponentially the larger demographic. If you are going to be inclusive, let that be FULLY inclusive. Men, women, children, black, white, European, indigineous, Caribbean, Asian, middle eastern, etc., etc., etc.
Do not do half-best and then rest on that saying ""well, we tried." If you're going to do it, commit to 100% or don't bother.
Do not spend taxpayers money foolishly
Do something about night life. Nothing to do in town after 1am, so young people leave to Surrey or Van and spend alot of money out there. Also get ride share out here. The cab company's are not equipped to handle concert nights. Insane trying to get a cab and its normally the only way to get around since people drink at concerts. Thank you.
Do something for peace
Doing more cultural celebration will bring the community together and learn each other culture
Don't make it all about businesses

dont be afraid to be a little edgy city of abb
Encourage and support gay pride in Abbotsford
Engage local artists to paint murals on blank canvasses like the one that used to be on the east wall of Magnuson Ford, the one on the east side of the highway going to Sumas near Costco.
ensure that there are activities in the day not only evening as seniors don't want to go out at night esp in the winter months
Ensuring diversity of cultural events, improving access- local transportation,
Even though some people make a decent wage once they pay all there household debt they cannot take there family to events due to costs.
Events are great but there never seems to be enough parking. Busses to parking lots to events would help.
Events need better marketing and need to be more affordable for the average citizen
Events that are intended for ALL to attend vs one specific group. For example if a specific culture is being highlighted, it would be good to have it organized in such a way that it is for everyone to experience vs a specifics cultural event for that specific culture only.
Everyone I know in the Abbotsford arts scene has experienced/vocalized a shortage of available art spaces when organizing events in Abbotsford, which pushes artists to the fringes of Abbotsford. It feels like they are being pushed out, which is why so many artists get disheartened and take their creativity outside the city.
Excited to see what the next few years bring to the city.
Fine
Fix parking
Focus on getting elementary students to the events. If they don't start at an early age enjoying the culture they are not going to be interested as they age. Monthly field trips.
For decades the performance community has requested support from the city, but instead, study after study is produced with no actual advancement for the arts community except in small secluded ways. There is no funding from the city for Abbotsford's biggest theatre and instead has put operating that theatre on the backs of the school district. Live performances build communities. Live performance is an economic boost when supported. Abbotsford should be embarrassed with their lack of commitment to live performance and spaces for live performers. You have a deserted downtown that is being revived, give space to the organizations that want to try and produce live shows. Don't be so scared of failure, it is cowardice and ego that seems to drive the city to continually deny the growth of the live arts here.

For it's size and it's growth pattern, Abbotsford should have a much more solid, clear and progressive plan to promote engagement for it's residents and potential resident's in the community they live in. Almost everything I do of consequence is elsewhere in the lower mainland.
For the size of Abbotsford I believe we are doing a great job on arts and culture events and festivals. I have attended the local festivals since I was a child and think it brings great exposure to the Abbotsford region. Having the events in the old downtown is also a great location as it showcases a very aesthetically pleasing part of Abbotsford
Free public events and investment in youth who will continue to invest in the Abbotsford arts community will contribute to its longevity. Improved transportation heading into the city would draw those from other communities.
fun and free or cheap things for younger people (late teens mid-twenties)
Funding or scholarships available for people wanting to participate in the arts/cultural events!
Future looks bright
Great idea
Greater promotion of our built heritage
Have a culturally diverse group of people creating the plan, Truth and Reconciliation for the Indigenous culture should be top priority.
"Have public meetings to get ideas / plan events To have volunteer opportunities more accessible through city newsletters or social media "
Having a good mix of teaching about the past history and culture of Abbotsford, while acknowledging and celebrating its current culture as Abbotsford continues to grow and change.
highlight and honour the local First Nations
Hire more forward-looking planners.
I am happy this initiative is finally taking place.
I am happy you are asking for opinions rather than just implementing
I am looking forward to seeing the Arts scene in Abbotsford
I am thankful for great music leadership by Calvin Dyck. I am thankful for Gallery 7 and other dramatic groups in our area. A place is needed for more intimate performances. Thanks.

I am very proud and amazed by the change in the arts lately and the new appreciation for other cultures
I appreciate my Mennonite heritage and am delighted to attend cultural functions that refer back to its basic principles.
I appreciate people of all cultures but I think that sometimes people that aren't considered popular cultures are left out I think there are English Irish Scottish people that would like to be heard from as well
I appreciate that actual people are very friendly in Abbotsford but I think city do not do enough to bring culture's together
I believe all cultures and nationalities should join together as one no racism and no hatred everyone has an equal and enjoying the lights together sharing each other's knowledge
I believe that all events should be inclusive. A sense of sharing heritage and culture rather than any segregated activities.
I believe that contibuting more time to this will result in indoviduals from all over Abbotsford of different heritages coming together to allow for them to conjoin as one community.
I believe that if the culture strategic plan is properly implemented with the focus of increasing awareness on different cultures in Abbotsford it will be succesful.
I believe that the city could do a better job in supporting local events that are already contributing to local culture - more substantial grants and finding a way that could connect the different groups that put on events to 'share resources'. Some of the larger non-profits that support events cultivating community spirit and cultural experiences could be supported through the city through more grants and advertising.
I believe this is a step in a positive direction, especially with the current political climate and rhetoric being observed around the world. As Canada was built on the foundation of immigrants from around the world, the right and ability to illustrate the amalgamation of cultures is something that many strongly advocate for. The melting pot of culture, history, and arts is what can bring us together and create unity. We all share history, culture and arts; sure the way it is expressed varies from individual to individual, it doesn't diminish it's significance. Learning and experiences the culture around us allows us to empathize and build bridges. Creating events that increase the discourse and ability to immerse one self into not only their own culture but share that of others as well is a wonderful opportunity to maintaining and expanding on Canada's pillar of multiculturalism.
I believe you should create more public spaces for people to engage and share thier talents... Space Making in different parks/ core areas & a Natural Amphitheatre/ outdoor Performance area
I don't have high hopes. Lots of things in Abbotsford are just broken, city has so much potential but Abbotsford seems to care more about its bottom line.
I drive to Chilliwack multiple times a week to take advantage of the programs and classes at their amazing cultural centre (e.g. clay open studio). It'd be great if Abbotsford had something similar.

I feel more indigenous space should be given to tell the true stories of all our Nations to Nations Peoples.
I feel the city has a duty to help highlight the peoples of this Nation and allow them to tell the true stories, the peoples of this land deserve to live in wealth in all aspects of their lives.
I feel we need to spread the word to not only people in Abby, but beyond. Sadly, people don't know how great this town is until we tell them. The news takes care of the negative, the positive needs to be shared, social media. (Abbotsford memes is a fun way for us to laugh and enjoy abby) We need more Abby related media, I'm tired of hearing what is happening in Vancouver, but not in the Valley.
I have just started learning about Abbotsford. It will be good if we can start a starter/orientation program for new comers so that they feel connected with the city right from the beginning of their journey of making Abbotsford their loving home.
I have no further comments. I think this survey summed it up really good.
I have over the past 50 years of involvement with theatre in Abbotsford attended at least four, maybe more, "investigative and planning workshops" to tabulate the needs of the arts community in Abbotsford. Other than The Reach, which is NOT a dedicated performing space, or much of a gallery or museum, nothing has ever come of most of it. It's time to quit asking questions and start listening to the responses and doing something about it. I would suggest that if someone already employed by the City had access to all the information from these workshops and tabulated them that they 'd find many of the same needs repeated over the years. Action, not words, is required.
I have seen alot of south asian celebrations/cultue, but i dont see enough Aboriginal cultural celebrations here. I would love to see Abbotsford hold a large pow wow celebratin here with the big drums. We have to travel to chilliwack or whiterock to go to them.
I hope that I will be able to help in planning and developing this plan.
I hope that this survey will result in positive action, not just an exercise in futility as has been done in the past. Abbotsford' population has grown leaps and bounds - let the growth be reflected in the arts and culture of our community. Vibrancy in Abbotsford hinges on positive action. Best wishes and thank you for allowing me a platform to express my views in this regard.
I hope this plan does not involve large increases in tax spending. Business development should be focus. New fascilities are needed for arts and culture, may largely be funded through private sector.

I just spent about 2 hours looking online for something to do as a girls night with some friends. I looked at the Reach, the local breweries, the What's On website, the City website, Abbotsford Tourism website and came up with almost nothing that would appeal to a group of women in our 30s. I've settled on going to the Abbotsford Social Association for my 37th birthday as it's walking distance from my house and it's live music which should be fun. I was so sad that there was almost nothing else to choose from though. At least as much as I could see! Just feels like nothing happens in this city, other than the Jubilee and Music in the Park in the summer. I'd love to see the old library downtown turned into an art space with a drop in pottery studio (like a real pottery studio, not Clay Cottage) or something like that!!

I just wish there were more things to do at night.

I just would like to see more cohesion, more buy in from major players with more space created for the smaller ones. A growth and awareness strategy and an \*attitude\* of support from the city.

I like it very strategic and planned out

I love Abbotsford so much. I would love to walk through a public garden, but I don't know of any. There are also few activities that happen after 5pm so regular working people of Abbotsford can't attend. There was a wine and art walk down town that sold out, so more events like that since they are popular. I think making historic down town open later and have more of a shopping vibe. I feel like each shop will give you such a different welcome it can be intimidating to just on your own walk from shop to shop to see if they have any treasures. I think it's great to develop and plan down town more since more people will be living there in the future. A singular place to look for events would be great. I love to follow on social media but I often find out about events after they happen. Don't listen to the Debbie downers, Abbotsford is great! And you guys rock for trying to improve our city in the country.

I love City of Abbotsford. Really appreciate all your efforts. Thanks

I love connecting with new people <3

I love jam in jubilee! And I love the farmers market! I think the rail district/Thurs night market could be successful -- keep doing it! I also love the craft beer industry that is popping up! It's great for a night out! I also have participated in the circle farm tour programs -- awesome! Keep working on the downtown area -- it really is slowly getting better! The wine/art walks are a huge hit!

I really like what is happening already! Keep up the amazing work all of you! <3

I stand in solidarity with where ever local arts organizations lay on the plan after having personally consulted with them. EG: CIVL, Abbotsford Arts Council, The Reach, Atangard, Jam In Jubilee etc etc

I think it would be wonderful to have more events where Children are encouraged to show there talents

I think it would be worthwhile to have something made on the mass population influx Abbotsford had in the mid 90s, and how that population inflow has changed the city since. It would educate the community on its recent history, and could be a part of the new cultural strategic plan. I have some ideas about how this could be done in terms of format (a short film) getting the population interested. I have some more ideas about where we are at culturally as a city.

I think it's important that all cultures are represented.

I think it's important to help promote not just safe ""middle of the road"" style art and culture but have places for more fringe and underground elements to grow so the city can be seen as a place where a younger, ""hipper"" crowd blossom as opposed to leaving for the bigger cities. Also an emphasis on All Ages spaces for underground music and art so it isn't always relegated to DIY venues or 19+ bars.

I think social media plays a pivotal role in the awareness of different cultural events. It is a means for many to explore different events in Abbotsford and beyond!

I think that representation is super important to take into account Abbotsfords unique diverse culture. As someone who lives in the downtown, I think more inclusion of our Indian population and First Nations is needed so that we don't have a homogenized gentrified 'historic' downtown. IF we're historic, we need to include those who have been apart of our communities history. Lastly, I think walkability and better transportation will aid in the culture in a very practical way - both feeding the already present movements towards green solutions and also, encouraging more of this. All to be said, thankful for all you guys do - there's a lot of people who love and deeply care about this area.

I think the Abbotsford community should be engaged and widely represented around the table, so that can reflect the voices and the composition of the community in Abbotsford.

I think the positive spin off effects of investing in the arts in a serious way should be presented to council; there are studies that support the rationale for investment. I think development can fund some of the public art.

I think the Reach does a great job and folks should get to know more about the programs it shares.

I think this is a good start. Having a conversation around what we'd like to see in terms of cultural programs and resources in our community would be a good place to start and analyze where we'd like to go. From my perspective, I see that cost and access to transportation are two of the biggest barriers that are keeping members of the south Asian community, particularly our seniors away from participating in the community cultural events. I'd like to see the city provide more funds for individuals or groups who would like to take a leadership role in planning and organizing cultural events. As someone who tries to do this on a regular basis, I often run into barriers, such as finding space that is free and accessible.

I think this is a great opportunity to see the City's plan and provide feedback! Arts and culture in Abbotsford have been improving significantly in recent years and with this proactive approach will continue to get better! We have so many creative people and groups in our city and I would far prefer to be a patron of local arts and culture than have to leave Abbotsford for this type of activities.

I think this Strategic Plan will bring the Abbotsford community even closer!

I think you are doing a great job. This survey is an excellent way to gather data that is important to those living in Abbotsford.

I wish that Abbotsford was a provincial leader in financing and promoting our local arts and culture.

I would encourage the City to enhance the involvement of community volunteers; they are doing a tremendous job and involvement is the key to enthusiasm for a project; I do not believe the City should spend additional funds on this objective when our citizens are clearly doing an excellent job; I am not aware of these volunteers complaining regarding a lack of funding or a need for more City oversight.

I would hope that education plays a role in the development of the new Culture Strategic Plan. The many aspects of culture can be difficult to define and the community needs some basic understanding before they can provide the kind of input a well-supported actionable plan requires. i.e.: in response to a Fb post promoting the online survey someone replied we need more gravel on trails and rubber under swings. Will the input from those who work and/or volunteer in culture be given more weight in the development of the plan? Perhaps culture should be re-assigned from Parks & Recreation to Development Services.

I would like to mention for more carnival, more cultural and religious events. So that people can engage more with it and gain more knowledge.

I would like to see more generalized events. Events that speak to everyone. The Berryfest is always great. The Christmas tree lighting is a part of Canada's customs, and attracts all nationalities and religions. I appreciate people being brought together in a common interest, rather than focusing on specific groups/religions/politics.

i would like to see more venues available in abbotsford within the next few years. I teach at an Abbotsford Dance Studio and it is very sad to see how little options we have for the arts in abbotsford. Always travelling to different cities and promoting their venues. As well as cost is a big issue. Being a brand new studio, we are unable to give our dancers the best spaces due to high costs in our beginning years. We LOVE supporting our community and it would be great to see more venues available to continue to bring our art into the community more.

I would like to see the Abbotsford events centre get used more frequently with better events, concerts and shows. The outdoor area surrounding the auditorium and university would also be great for outdoor markets or concerts. Make a road DT walking only, restaurants patios out front, so the street became more social. Now that's culture! (An example would be Argyle street in Halifax NS)

I would like to see the city have an all encompassing arts center that covers all types of art. There are already loads of music studios, and dance studios, but where are the pottery and ceramics studios? Where are the Design Sciences, where are the carving and sculpture studios? Where can the artists that do live here display their works? And who knows about these places other than the people that have exhibited there for years? Make arts more accessible to everyone, not just the select few who have been here forever.

I would love to keep the culture of Abbotsford, just give more opportunity for people to be engaged and involved citywide events. Better publicity would be awesome!

I would love to see a community space that is welcome for all (not pretentious) that's low cost, where people can see shows, take workshops, learn skills, and build community.

I would love to see higher quality of events. For example, the Berry Festival and the Winter Jubilee seem to be almost the exact same thing with the same vendors, just at different times of the year. Very little there actually has to do with berries or winter. There are vendors advertising everything from banks to beads, but not a lot that really celebrates the essence of the advertised event, so it feels a bit pointless to attend, except for it being something to do.

- I would love to see Mill Lake utilized for more events. Building an amphitheatre would be amazing.
- Events with beer gardens (we have so many amazing local breweries)
- More events in historic downtown Abbotsford (Montrose area)
- Would love to see across-department collaboration for events (more than just setting up a booth with handbills & guides)
- Larger social media presence. Young families are not looking at the newspaper, or bus stop posters. We are on social media or word of mouth.

I would love to see more cultural events for all cultures, more awareness in the news when events happen. Events such as indigenous day activities never make it in the news, would be nice for communities to know what is happening so they can participate

I would love to see more diversity in our events. As a growing city I'm seeing a wide variety of different cultures and would love to see that change visible in our city events. For example City held Celebrations for lunar new year would be amazing. I would love for my children to be able to learn about their culture in their own city and not have to travel to Vancouver or China town to take part in the celebrations

I would love to see the city get more involved with the pride walk!

I would really like to see an event created that could encourage equal participation of the indo-canadian population and the North American population. Very often I feel the events are separate. Or at least they come across that way. It would be nice to have an event where we could learn more about each other's cultures and share our common interests and beliefs.

I would say just make it more vibrant and ask more people and youth for ideas to make sure they stay in Abbotsford.

I would like to submit idea of airdronic chairs, metal bikes or rocking chairs in parks representing families with plaques and place for plants. Interactive people can sit, with families name/initial, quilt pattern or mandela  
2nd idea is barn quilts through city & hwy 1 representing family history of farms(cell phone) reads the history of barn quilt, maps supplied at tourist spots, online

I'd like to see more of a focus on art as there are already various cultural/heritage focussed events.
I'm glad to hear that Abbotsford is doing more to consider the importance of art & culture. Public art personally is an extremely important aspect of bringing colour, life and culture into a place; like the abundance of murals in Montreal. I would love to see more local artist's murals around Abbotsford, especially showcasing different cultural art.
I'd like an art centre for the public, where anyone can attend low cost introductory classes for pottery, painting, photography, writing, music, acting, etc. A place where intermediate and advanced students can sign up for classes, share their love of art, and grow the arts community.
I'd like to see more diversity. Personally in our home. My husband is Japanese our son has no option to learn anything in Abbotsford until he is in high school. Langley has 1 elementary Japanese immersion school. Which we are not able to enrol him as they don't accept cross district.
I'd like to see more free music festivals or concerts. Jazz, Blues, Rock, Country, and Indigenous or Ethnic.
I'm concerned about how some of the questions in this survey were phrased, indicating a lack of knowledge regarding the breadth and scope of arts and culture. Live theatre, of which this community has three long-standing organizations, is not even mentioned as an activity. How did the survey writers determine which cultural activities, events, and festivals were mentioned, and which were not. I've noted those concerns with the specific questions those concerns pertained to.  Having said that, I am glad that the City is conducting this survey and working on an arts and cultural plan for the community. Please don't let this become 'lip-service' to the arts community - really listen, take some risks, think beyond the wall of City Hall, and continue to CONSULT with the arts and culture community as this plan is put together.
I'm glad the city is developing this plan. As a queer person with no kids, I've felt mostly uninterested in cultural offerings in the city, and unsafe at events I have attended.
I'm happy with the development of Fraser Valley Pride events over the last couple of years, but this needs more funding and more community involvement.
I'm happy you're doing this. I think that culture can be a win/win scenario that benefits individuals, the city, and is also good for the economy. Quality of life is important to everyone and culture is a prime component of that.
I'm originally from port Coquitlam and I miss things like the may fair parade etc I love the farmers markets and berry festival both were huge hits in my house
I'm thankful for this type of survey. Thank you for asking what we would be interested in.

In my opinion, if cultural events are made more inclusive, there will be more engagement. These events should be made more accessible cost wise and schedule wise as well. These events could be marketed through social media to target younger and middle aged audience, through newspaper ads to target older people. People associate arts events as boring. These could be made more fancy or instagram worthy so that people can advertise it or through word of mouth. Thanks

In the ethnicity section, there is no option for European/UK

In the household income section, there is no option for over \$100,000/yr. the highest household income option is \$50-100K, which may impact your stats

In the last few years I have noticed a lot more emphasis on culture and arts in the town, which is awesome. I'd love for there to be activities for those of all age ranges and interests. Make things accessible to people money-wise but also disability-wise (physical and mental).

Indigenous inclusive across the board

Integration is vital to combat "residential sorting". I appreciate Abbotsford's diversity but would love to celebrate its history more often.

Investment in art spaces, facilities, education, programing, festivals, public art and infrastructure is an insurance policy for a healthy community. Best outcomes for the investment. Best vehicle for protecting vulnerable youth and insuring social cohesion. Best investment for health outcomes. All around best investment period.

It doesn't need to be expensive. Local cultural groups should be encouraged to have public celebrations at which all are invited to join in. Street dances, sidewalk sales, hot dog days, open air vendors would also help to bring people together. Even block yard sales help bring neighbours and the community together. Take a look at what other communities are doing. Make more events all inclusive. Make everything a celebration.

It is great the City is beginning to prioritize arts & culture. Very happy to participate in engagement on a Culture Strategic Plan.

it is more about 'multi-cultural' strategy that needs to be considered.

It is very culturally diversified community

It should be a monthly thing. I think the more we bring culture into our daily lives the more acceptance there will be. I wish I knew more about what is going on in our community. I don't search things out, but will attend if I see a poster or advertisement on social media. We end up missing lots of events because we don't know about them. I also think these events need to remain an all ages events. And accessible to people of all abilities.

It should be advertised thoroughly to make folks aware that the event is on.
It should be inclusive. I have noticed these are often dominated by a particular group of people.
It would be awesome to have more free drop in events especially new active opportunities!
It would be helpful for the 19+ crowd if the bars were occasionally allowed to stay open past 1 for arts or cultural events
It would be interesting to access webinars from the comfort of your own home. This could be cultural story telling or directed art projects.
It's a tough situation, I really believe Abbotsford is already doing better culturally than one would expect. (especially before I moved out here) The Fraser Valley Symphony is a real jewel out here and I wish it was given more support.
It's great to have a tradition and it be continued through the arts. Building an event from the ground up with excellence and quality in mind will always lead to success - from its organization to the execution of the event. If you have an excellent product, people will support and want to be involved or a part of it. With this in mind, it would be great to see arts take more focus in more areas within East-West Abbotsford to connect our entire community. Sharing events but involving groups from all parts of Abbotsford might allow for this to successful happen.
It's not clear if you are addressing Culture and Arts, or simply Culture. Both are part of the vibrancy of our city.
Keep at it!
Keep it up!
Less religion and more openness
Let the public know, through the City's newsletter and local media, the names of heritage and culture research firms that respond to the City's advertising for companies to undertake any Culture Strategic Plan as the City has used the Arlington Group Planning and Architecture Inc. and the CV Marketing Research Inc. (City of Abbotsford - Arts and Heritage Master Plan 2004 & Heritage Strategic Plan - January 2005) and Donald Luxton & Associates (City of Abbotsford - Statements of Significance 2003-2006)
Live theatre and small concerts are important to me.
long overdue. time to invest in this as a priority for Abbotsford.

Looking forward to see how this lovely city becomes more alive. Would be nice for the younger generations to have a variety of things to choose from for their cultural enjoyment.

For myself, I'm just happy going to a movie every so often. But if Abbotsford were to play more Bollywood movies (in Hindi) rather than just Punjabi movies, then I wouldn't have to travel outside of Abbotsford for that. Also, if the arena on King Rd could be used to bring Bollywood events (like concerts), then someone like me (I'm not Punjabi, and not from India, but from Indian background), then that would be nice too.

How about bringing spiritual developmental events and speakers to Abbotsford, like Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, Tony Robbins, Abraham Hicks, etc! I would definitely attend those!

Thanks for this survey, it made me realize that I really don't do much anymore, culturally.

Love the Mill Lake concert series - please make sure it continues with it's current focus. Consider changing the stage location of it as the sun is right on the performers.

Make it a fun city to be living in with something from all cultures it could be a blend or festivals, but food always brings people and when you add fun things and music, culture activities, people from other cultures will come and learn and enjoy these cultures they may never have bothered to learn about and they will also become more accepting of these cultures. If it's blended people won't feel so out of place

Make it fun

Make sure to highlight and lift up the voices of those in minority communities, like ingenious people, other POC and queer (LGBTQIA2S) people in this process.

Make them affordable

Many more events and performances, and much more variety, needed. Compared to Chilliwack and Mission, our event schedule seems very sparse.

Maybe something for LGBTQ people

Monthly news letter based on culture

More aboriginal activities please!

More advertisement and affordable rates for family

More awareness for certain events. For instance, I have performed at jam in jubilee berry festival and mill lake music . I see jam in jubilee and berry festival advertised all the time. But not so much mill lake music. Also, if there was possibly more variety of music at jam in jubilee. It seems to be pretty much geared towards one age range even though people of many ages congregate.

More awareness is needed for events and local museums. For example, I've lived in Abbotsford for 4 years and still don't know if the (reach?) art gallery has any events going on at any given time during the week.
More cultural activities
more faith-based and more LGBT events
more family friendly events that are free or low cost
More funding for history and especially museums to showcase Abbotsford's remarkable heritage.
More funding for local artists and a wider field of access for local artists to show their work.
More funding for youth programs, such as Youth Orchestra and Mennonite Children's Choir. Also: for more exchanges of youth cultural programs: travel for our youth and bringing other youth areas groups to Abbotsford.
More inclusive events
more nature style culture. outside gardens and hiking trails etc
More programs for youth to help keep them focused on positive healthy activities
More spaces for artists!
More worldly food festivals/ markets. Having free dance shows at parks, setting up festive markets and celebrating the many cultures that reside here. More music and activities that bring people together. I've done quite a bit of travelling and there's so much opportunity for growth in this city! It's going to take a lot of creative thinking, but I have hope it can become a vibrant city, that people know if and will want to travel to.
More youth involvement could help a lot. I myself would be interested in planning events. Holding events that different cultures can relate to would be awesome. Residents of Abbotsford would feel welcomed and celebrated.
Moved to Abbotsford in 1992 from Prince George and was totally shocked at the lack of cultural events here. There is no dedicated playhouse or theatre for plays. The city hall is not a playhouse. No symphony that has events for children. Prince George symphony always had a Christmas concert for young children. Lack of advertising for events. Attend more cultural events in Mission
Need a larger gallery for the Arts Council, or additional spaces for showing art. Examples: Mission Arts Council has used spaces in rec centres; Victoria Arts Council coordinates spaces for artists to show and sell all over the city of Victoria. This is certainly missing in Abbotsford. More public art and murals would also be an asset.

Need a proper venue for live theatre like Gallery 7
Need a theatre similar to Chilliwack with food and beverages available for purchase. Abby arts is too small and @abbotsford centre does not have the right environment.
Need more diverse cultural events
Need to consider City of Abbotsford not controlling the cultural efforts - more resources should be allotted to supporting the people that are already doing the work and need support. The City should be the support system, not working on the front lines - there are people that are already doing that, they just need the City to make more of a commitment.
Need to do more for less. We participate in as many events as we can, but mission often does the events better. The new Christmas tree lighting fest is awesome now and full credit to those that set that up. Reading fest and earth day deal at Mill lake are very well done. Talk to those people and see what they do well. Continue getting a media company like Cassiar that has those great Abbotsford videos that are so funny.
New Art Centre for local artist - plus teaching music and musical instruments in schools
No but even though i never know about the events, i can see the change in abby's atmosphere from the late 80's when i first moved in and now. Much more vibrant alive city now.
No but the city should have acknowledged World Holocaust Day , it was the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the camps as other towns and cities did around the globe. I went to city hall and they told me they do not do that type of thing. I was totally discusted.We are a multi cultural and religious city where they basically told it"s Jewish residents to f off.
Not everyone is Christian...
Not much, just improve the findings and should have some more programs in the city.
On visiting our local art gallery we have found that the displays are from non local artists. Displays are ridiculous at times. So we stopped attending.
our city is diverse and therefore strategy and culture should reflect same
Our city is doing grate in culture activities. As we know many people in abootsford are Asian or form other regions of world. We should organize something culture activities according to thier culture and history so other people can also learn from it.
Parking at these events is the biggest issue for me

People in Abbotsford love to make things with their own hands. I would be very happy to see many more community-based facilities and programs for creating art: more studios, pottery, wood shops, metal shops, sewing, leather work, jewellery, etc. Also more about the history of the place and its artists, and more recognition and action to honour and preserve historical artists, and the current living treasures.

Please bring a Luminara festival to Abbotsford

PLEASE DO MORE FUN THINGS - LIKE A CITYWIDE STREET MARKET OR SOMETHING LIKE HONESTLY THERE IS NOTHING TO DO HERE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AND DONT YOUR SAY OH YOU JUST NEVER ATTEND THESE THINGS, YOUR EVENTS ARE AWFUL, MAKE THEM MORE ACCESSIBLE AND INTERESTING FOR THE YOUTH (AND NOT CHILDREN, I MEAN LIKE LEGAL ADULT YOUTH, WE DONT NEED PARKS WE NEED BEER GARDENS)

Please give more consideration and consultation to the groups of people like the Abbotsford Arts Council, The Reach, CIVL Radio etc who expend their time & energy creating events that celebrate arts & culture; their insight is crucial in developing future cultural planning. I hope this survey gets a lot of responses! Thank you.

Please make it more modern and dependable on western culture and stop playing Punjabi songs everywhere...

Please take a strategic approach as noted above by recognizing that the City needs to aggressively nurture a high quality of life that is affordable, safe and entrepreneurial. Communities that bring this orientation naturally have vibrant culture. Government does not create culture per say.

Positive influence on our youth: inspiational, role models, mind expanding, thought provoking, genuine quality entertainment. One, well-Advertised, popular, colossal event a year, could set Abbotsford up for more frequent ones. Positioning us to truly be a destination of choice. Bringing revenue and a reputation for quaiity and value (hotels, meals, side activites, etc.).

Preserve historical buildings, help small business

Promote Canadian unity amongst all the various groups by NOT promoting sperate cultures

Realize that the "city in the country" moniker means that we have a wealth of outdoor experiences and culture to participate in. Protect Ledgeview and Sumas mountain from further development, promote the mapping and creation of hiking trails and circuits, of mountain biking trails and water ways. Map trails through Sumas and Matsqui prairie. Engage people in the awesome outdoors that Abbotsford has at its disposal, create more firepit sites in the parks to offer more space to more people. Open up the Old Clayburn brick factory thing as an unguided tourist attraction. Put trails through the Townline and Aberdeen region similar to discovery trial. Finish discovery trail.

Regular updates in the paper

Round table meeting with all parties such as Stölö leaders, law enforcement, MCFD, city workers and whoever else is important. This would be beneficial to also add indigenous- non-indigenous community members and Youth. This would help with building bridges among the people.

Sacred stories bind us together, they help us to empathize with our neighbors. We need more: Scottish, Roman Catholic, Indigenous, Polish, Korean, LGBTQ+, Female voices to be heard. We need to treasure their stories and values as much as we value anyone else's. Do we have fair representation of all voices and groups in Abbotsford, or do certain voices control the conversation and story more than others?

Saw topaz rock band at the mill lake car show. Great local band that all ages seemed to love

Should be more cultural subjects provided in City evening classes/courses (e.g. teaching to play musical instruments, guitar, etc) and courses on art, stained glass, other crafts, etc.

So much improvement in the last 5-10 years... keep up the good work!

some culture programs are expensive.lack of sitting seats for people

sounds good . You are on the right track.

Sounds like a great idea! Happy Abbotsford is trying to bring people together :).

Sports is well taken care of but now we need more of this type of program.

Start having different heritage days through out the spring to summer

Stop involving UFV people so much. For example, Jam in Jubilee used to be alright, but now it is a hipster festival. Also, I was very disappointed when fake news Abbotsford News published an article about a weekly market with live music downtown--after the first week. I made plans with my girlfriend who came out all the way from Langley for this--AND IT WAS NOT ON...IT WAS ONLY THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

Stop tearing down all your old houses to put up ugly houses that will themselves be torn down in 25 years. Recognize your vernacular/community history through homes, the heart and soul of a community.

Stop wasting our tax dollars on this. Clean up the city and have standards in the neighbourhood building (no more mega houses in older heritage areas).

The art/wine walks should be cancelled as it's just a bunch of sloppy drunk women walking the streets.

Take a look at the amazing opportunity Chilliwack has for its citizens. Plays. Dance, needlework classes, painting, pottery , comedy shows. To name only a few. Amazing! Would love to see similar things in Abbotsford

Target all age groups and make awareness more available
Tell the true history including colonial abuses ie residential school genocide at Mission St Mary Destruction of sumacs lake and culture RCMP racism and violence
Thank you for engaging the community this way. Although limited feedback on my part, hoping you receive more from others.
Thank you for your efforts.
Thank you for your work and would love to have more child inclusive activities.
Thanks for doing this! I look forward to there being more events open to all in Abbotsford.
Thanks for the doing this survey and collecting out opinions. It's a great initiative. I would like to see our city having more art and culture.
the best event i've attended was at the Surrey Art Gallery where traditional indian music was paired with hiphop and musicians took turns playing their music together (RupLoops and Mohamed Asani) and it would be awesome to see things like that in Abbotsford.
The City of Abbotsford can have more involving events of all ages.
The City of Abbotsford needs to consult the professionals in the cultural sector. The cultural strategic plan is flawed by design to misinform the public into thinking there is a plan at all. Relying on the private sector, not investing in any new infrastructure and using stats that do not represent the previous years lack of funding is shameful. There is no "plan" when your plan is to take a hands off approach. The cultural sector will keep moving forward and the surrounding communities will be increasingly aware of the lack of support that Abbotsford provides to its working professionals in the cultural sector.
The Reach Gallery Museum is a gem.
The taxpayers of Abbotsford spent a fortune building the Reach...why do we need to increase operating funding for the Reach's Board of Directors? Why not leave it to them to innovate and create program options to raise enough money to sustain the Reach. Why do taxpayers always have to pay? Whose behind this survey?
There are many cultures and it would be so nice to see activities that celebrate more diverse cultures like Eastern European , Mexican, etc.
There must be a way to keep it pg-rated and inclusive while still having an edge, and more importantly uniqueness. Abbotsford's reputation everywhere is that it's very boring and no fun, we need something truly cool that is rare in other communities.

There needs to be more first Nations events in Abbotsford.
There should be more cultural activities that are accessible for families and individuals that don't have funds to usually participate in such activities
This is garbage
Tonight looking forward to it
Too many religious based events.
Too much multiculturalism.
Traditionally Abbotsford has been the religious fuddy duddy neighbour (Flanders). Let's open it up.
Try to have some free events but not to many that will be really expensive. Part of our culture is the homeless people in our neighborhood, we should try to help them as much as we can.
Two areas of focus for targeted support and active promotion / integration of culture in Abbotsford should be that for our LGBTQ community and the Sumas & Matsqui First Nation/Sto:lo Bands.  I believe that there is greater opportunity to support, integrate and highlight these cultures while respecting the conservative views of the Abbotsford population.
U have very unique demographics amongst most all cities in Canada. Step up and become SUPER LEADERS. Be the Light. Show the rest of the municipalities how it's done proper eh
Unity through culture and art is key Ina community. Having events that are accessible to all, to create a sense of community in our town would help bridge the divide between religions and ages. Providing places for local artists to teach classes, share their art for the public to view and purchase, and for local musicians to share and sell their music, would create a rich atmosphere and healthy entertainment for Abbotsford.
Valuing the arts and culture benefits the city both economically and socially. It is worth investing in more than has been done in the past.
We appreciate tHat the city of Abbotsford seems to be moving forward to look at the issue that needs much improvement.,
We are happy as all communities can celebrate their own culture independently .
We are in desperate need of a theatre that is not operated by the school district. There is too much competition to get suitable availability. MCA is not adequately equipped for full theatre productions.

We are lucky to have so many great opportunities in the broader region i.e. Mission-Clarke; Chilliwack; Fort Langley music festivals and greater Langley as well as Vancouver of course. People need to be made aware of local small venues for them to succeed and expand offerings. We would like to see more live music venues for intimate shows; with food etc. Important to be holistic in determining Abbotsford's niche in this broader geography. Unusual venues would be nice like theatre under the stars, music/food @ wineries; nature programming at parks for all ages.

We can celebrate like in many indian festivals Diwali as Mission City. as multiculturalism gatherings.

We have a beautiful setting for many out door summer concerts with the mountains as a back drop. Set up a field bring in a big name and donate a percentage of the earnings to a charity.. People will come.

We have lived here 30 years and seen many changes! We are excited to be a part of the growth of the city and all the cultural events that take place.

We need a good community theatre space and government support for it

we need an affordable centre for the arts that enables citizens to \*create\* art - studios, art lessons, music ensembles, pottery wheels and kilns, glass making, amateur community theatre, central ownership of essential making equipment. How about an arts cooperative? Let's be makers not just consumers!!

We need cannabis consumption lounges.

We need more "weird" (for lack of a better word) spaces/events in Abbotsford. Culture should about full expression and openness to that expression. A little more personality and quirky-ness.

We need more live music venues. Smaller venues, the kind that will hold up to 500 people. So that local talent can perform in a space they can afford to rent, that is specifically geared toward music and theatre events.

We need more!! Like pow wows, outside fun in the sun nights. Two-spirited dances for all peoples.

We need to get out of our vehicles! I don't feel safe riding a bicycle in this city, even with the bike lanes.

We need to have more venues and more affordable and attractive events that bring all cultures together. When you google 'what to do in Abbotsford?' the same attractions always show up. I would love to see more plays come here and comedy shows. A mosaic event.

We seem to spend a lot of time planning and never putting time and money into acting. It seems that there are many directions, the City can go, but it is important to start doing something.

We spend a lot of time driving to the Chilliwack Cultural Center to see plays, concerts, etc. We need to match or better their facility and commitment in Abbotsford!