



The Ontario Culture Strategy
**Telling our stories,
growing our economy**

Culture is everyday good living, a way of life, shared histories, values, beliefs, vitality, beauty, pride, play, sport, recreation, leisure, fashion, cultural industries, entertainment, live music, photography, publishing, architecture, civic spaces, art, design, interactive digital media, watching television, movies, learning, trying new things, language, books and magazines, crafts, humour, amateur and professional theatre, dance, opera, pow wows, maple syrup festivals, agricultural festivals, farmers' markets, cultural institutions, museums, archives, historical societies, built heritage and cultural heritage landscapes, fishing, hunting and trapping, social interaction, social cohesion, citizen engagement, sustainability, the products of artists and entrepreneurs. Culture is tangible and intangible. Culture means good mental health, good relationships and enlarged spirits. Culture provides joy. Libraries are sanctuaries for many people. Food defines who we are and where we are from. Music is an essential part of human experience. Archaeology is very important to complement or fill gaps in the written record. Culture is the sharing of creative knowledge, skills and talents. It is volunteering, donating and working selflessly to build strong communities. Culture is bold. It is creativity and imagination. It is reflection and creative thinking. It is knowledge and understanding. It is innovation and technology. It is provocation and exploration of new ideas. Art must be democratic but must also go beyond consensus to be edgy and challenge us. Culture is an expression of our identity and history. It is an explanation and exploration of who we are. It is how we enjoy ourselves. It helps us understand where we live and presents Ontario to the rest of the world. It fosters awareness. It is our wilderness and our friendliness. Culture starts with gaining an accurate understanding of the historical accomplishments of African/Black people. It is a community's past, present and future. Culture is what unites Franco-Ontarians and reflects them back to themselves. It is a means of intergenerational transmission.

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Kim Adams
(Canadian b. 1951).

Bruegel-Bosch Bus
1997-ongoing
sculpture-installation
1960s Volkswagen bus,
figurines, mixed media.

Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Acquired with the assistance
of the York Wilson
Endowment Award at The
Canada Council for the Arts,
and with funds from The
E. Muriel Baker Estate, The
Russell Nelson Eden Estate,
and the Walter and Duncan
Gordon Foundation, 2001.

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Inside front and back covers:
In our public engagement
process, we asked people
to describe culture. These
are some of the words
and phrases you used.



Minister's message



Arts and culture inspire us, bring us together and make our communities and economy stronger. They give us opportunities for self-expression and have the potential to transform lives, especially for our children and youth.

In September 2015, the Ontario government set out to create the province's first Culture Strategy, starting with a public engagement process, Culture Talks, to ask what culture means to you and your community. Through large town halls, small group discussions, meetings with Indigenous partners and communities, an online dialogue and written submissions, thousands of you shared your perspectives and priorities with us.

We heard clearly that culture matters deeply to Ontarians, that it is an essential part of individual and community well-being. We heard, too, that culture includes an almost limitless array of human experiences and expressions. Thank you for your tremendous response. Your input helped shape the Ontario Culture Strategy.

I would like to thank my colleague, the Honourable Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism, for his leadership of the public engagement process and the development of the Culture Strategy, as the former Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister Coteau and I are grateful to the members of the Culture Strategy Advisory Group for their dedication, advice and valuable insights throughout the process of creating the Culture Strategy.

Ontario's diversity, in both people and places, is one of our greatest strengths. We have unique urban, rural and Northern communities, and communities formed through shared origins, histories, lived experiences and languages. This diversity is reflected in our creative expressions and it is what makes arts and culture in Ontario distinct and remarkable.

Opportunities to experience arts and culture should be available to everyone, and our diverse voices should be heard and celebrated. The government of Ontario, our culture and tourism agencies, and many other dedicated organizations and individuals, including artists and volunteers, work hard every day in communities across Ontario to make sure this happens.

This Strategy builds on all of that work by focusing government support where it is needed most: to promote cultural engagement and inclusion, strengthen culture in communities, maximize the contributions of culture and creativity to our knowledge economy and promote the value of the arts throughout government.

I am excited to launch Ontario's first Culture Strategy. We will continue the dialogue we began with Culture Talks as we move forward to implement the Strategy and strengthen the arts and culture sector for all Ontarians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eleanor McMahon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey background.

Honourable Eleanor McMahon
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Culture Strategy Advisory Group

We thank the members of our Culture Strategy Advisory Group for their dedication, advice and valuable insights throughout the process of creating the Ontario Culture Strategy.

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Heritage Services) and Museum
of Ontario Archaeology

Ontario's stories



The Global Savages Sunrise Ceremony on Wikwemikong Bay.
Photo provided by Debajehmujig Storytellers.

Introduction

Ontario's stories are rooted in the rich diversity of our landscapes and peoples.

Our vast and varied landscape spans more than a million square kilometres, from Hudson Bay and the boreal forests of the Far North to the Great Lakes and deciduous forests of the south, and from the Manitoba border in the west to the banks of the Ottawa River in the east. Ontario encompasses 444 municipalities and is covered by 46 treaties and other agreements between First Nations and the Crown.

Ontario is home to over 13 million people: Indigenous peoples with deep ties to the land and water; Francophones who celebrated 400 years in Ontario in 2015; disability and Deaf communities with specific cultural and linguistic identities; people from many different ethno-cultural backgrounds who strive to retain their languages and traditions; and many more diverse communities. We have all helped to weave the fabric of today's Ontario and our stories continue to evolve in exciting ways as our population grows and changes.

Our stories are reflected in our languages, value systems, beliefs, cultural identities, traditions, and the food we lovingly prepare and share. They are embodied in artifacts, heritage buildings and places, cultural and natural landscapes, and in the land itself.

We tell our stories through film and television, music and opera, visual arts and interdisciplinary arts, media arts and interactive digital media like video games and apps, theatre and dance, books and magazines and crafts.

We tell our stories through the architecture of the buildings and spaces we inhabit and that inspire us, the design that adds value to just about everything we touch and use, and the fashion we choose for function and style.

Art galleries, museums, science centres, cultural centres, archives, historical societies, Friendship Centres and public libraries act as storehouses of knowledge and culture, telling our stories, giving us windows onto the world and bringing the world to us.

We celebrate our stories together at pow wows and Rendezvous events, historical re-enactments and multi-sport games, through art and theatre in the park, at music and film festivals, cultural and multicultural festivals, food and agricultural festivals, and at annual events like Doors Open Ontario and Culture Days.

And all of this, of course, is only the beginning. We tell our stories in many other ways.

Culture matters to Ontarians

In fall 2015, we began the process of developing the Culture Strategy with an extensive public engagement process. This was the first time Ontario had held such a far-reaching dialogue with individuals and communities across the province and with all culture sectors about the value and significance of culture. Thousands of people participated through town halls, written submissions and an interactive digital platform. We held smaller community conversations with Francophones, youth, seniors, ethno-cultural communities, newcomers, people with disabilities and people who are Deaf. We also held meetings with Indigenous partners and communities. We reported back with “Culture Talks: A Summary of What We Heard from Ontarians.”²

What did we mean by “culture”?³ We neither defined nor limited its meaning. We wanted to discover what it means to Ontarians and their communities and we learned that it means many different and important things. The response was remarkable for both volume and passion. On the inside front and back covers, we have collected some of the hundreds of ways people defined culture and described why it is important to them.

From every corner of the province, in many different voices and in many different words, the overwhelming message we heard was that culture matters profoundly to Ontarians.

Culture enriches every part of our lives

Culture gives free flight to our imaginations, lifts our spirits, entertains us, gives us hope and inspires us in unexpected and sometimes life-changing ways. It gives shape, context and understanding to our experiences and the experiences of others. It can challenge us, ask difficult questions, make us wonder and motivate us to find answers. It reflects and re-imagines our world. Culture connects us and creates community identity, cohesion, vibrancy and prosperity.

As our public engagement process made clear, culture is a fundamental, organic and vital part of our lives and our community life. Many people spoke or wrote about culture as a fourth pillar of community sustainability and well-being, alongside social equity, economic health and environmental responsibility.⁴ Participation in arts, culture and recreation is an indicator of quality of life in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.⁵



Art in the Moment gallery tour at the AGO. Photo by the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Culture influences our well-being at all stages of life. In the early years, at school, and through after-school and community-based arts and culture programs, children develop creativity, cross-cultural understanding and often a lifetime connection to arts and culture. Along with techniques for self-expression, youth learn collaboration, problem-solving, leadership, and entrepreneurial and professional skills. For at-risk youth especially, engagement in arts and culture is linked to improved social skills and higher academic achievement.

Through the many learning opportunities offered by individual artists, arts organizations, galleries, museums, science centres, botanical gardens and public libraries, arts and cultural experiences support lifelong learning and help develop the talent and skills of Ontarians of all ages. A growing body of research also shows that opportunities to engage with arts and culture build confidence and improve physical and mental health, especially for our seniors.

Ontario's rich and diverse cultural heritage⁶ gives our communities identity and character, and it enhances our sense of place and pride in where we live. Conserving our cultural heritage reflects what we value about our past, what we have learned from it and what we want future generations to know. Kingston's limestone buildings, Windsor's Walkerville, Cobalt's mine headframes and the Kinomaage-Waapkong ("The Teaching Rocks") in Petroglyphs Provincial Park are just a few examples from across the province.

Heritage buildings and districts can revitalize downtown cores and main streets, creating desirable neighbourhoods and supporting local economic development. Reusing buildings also cuts down on landfill waste, protects greenfield land and can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One report comparing buildings of equivalent size and function found that building reuse almost always offers environmental savings over demolition and new construction.⁷ As architect Carl Elefante put it, "The greenest building is...one that is already built."⁸

Ontario's outstanding cultural institutions, attractions, festivals and events infuse our communities and our province with energy and vitality — and contribute to economic development and tourism. Spending by arts and culture tourists generates about \$3.9 billion in GDP and supports about 61,000 jobs in the province.⁹

Culture also supports the economy through direct and indirect job creation. In 2014, culture contributed about \$25.3 billion, or nearly four per cent, to Ontario's GDP, supporting almost 280,000 jobs.¹⁰ Engagement in arts and culture is a catalyst for creative thinking and innovation, and communities where arts and culture thrive attract creative, talented and skilled people to live and work there. These are essential qualities in the knowledge economy and vital to Ontario's future growth and prosperity.



Overview of the Culture Strategy



The Gryphon Trio is joined by violist Paul Coletti for a performance at Koerner Hall during the Toronto Summer Music Festival. Photo by Peter Alberti.

Input into the Strategy

The Culture Strategy reflects the input we received during our public engagement process, as well as research we undertook to gather information on culture in Ontario, investigate key trends affecting the sector and look at how jurisdictions around the world are responding to similar trends.¹¹ Both the research and public input identified Ontario's increasing diversity and digital technology as two of the greatest impacts on culture in Ontario, now and in the years to come.

While we were developing the Strategy, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, which shed light on the brutalities committed at residential schools and set out a path toward reconciliation for all Canadians.¹² The report exposes the terrible truth that the residential school system was specifically intended to destroy Indigenous identities and cultures. In our discussions with Indigenous partners and communities, we learned that reconnecting children and youth with their traditional cultures and languages is an urgent priority. The Journey Together:



Visit to the AGO through the Institute for Canadian Citizenship's 'Ahlan Canada' program. Photo by Andrew Williamson Photography.

Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is a plan for working with Indigenous partners to address the legacy of residential schools, close gaps and remove barriers.¹³ The plan seeks to create a culturally relevant and responsive justice system, support Indigenous cultures and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Page 8:
Publicity image for
Sampradaya Dance
Creations for the
production of *Prayoga*
staged at Meadowvale
Theatre in Mississauga.
Photo by On Up
Photography.



Walk Off The Earth performing at CityFolk in Ottawa. Photo by Steve Gerecke.

Ontario continues to work with the Chiefs of Ontario to address issues around Indigenous heritage and burial sites in response to the report of the 2007 Ipperwash Inquiry.¹⁴ We also built on two other critical relationship agreements in developing the Culture Strategy. In August 2015, the Chiefs of Ontario and the Government of Ontario signed an historic Political Accord to guide the relationship between First Nations and the province. The Accord affirms that First Nations have an inherent right to self-government, that the relationship between Ontario and First Nations must be based upon respect for this right and commits the parties to work together on issues of mutual interest.¹⁵

In April 2014, the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Government of Ontario renewed the Framework Agreement¹⁶ to advance reconciliation between the Crown and the Métis people through actions including improving the well-being of Métis children, families and communities. In charting our path forward, understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures will play a key role.

Guided by a vision and principles

Everything we do as we implement the Culture Strategy will be guided by a vision and principles. We invited feedback on the vision and principles during our public engagement process and we are confident that they reflect the values that are important to Ontarians.



Working toward four overarching goals

The Culture Strategy sets out four overarching goals for the next five years: promote cultural engagement and inclusion, strengthen culture in communities, fuel the creative economy and promote the value of the arts throughout government. These goals reflect our commitment to removing barriers and increasing opportunities for cultural participation. They also balance the important social and economic benefits of culture and reinforce the vital role artists and arts organizations play in communities, in the creative economy and in helping to build a more inclusive society. Each goal includes strategies and actions.

Building on the work of our agencies and attractions

Ontario's agencies and attractions undertake their own processes to respond to changes that affect their mandates. For example, two of our granting partners have completed planning and redesign processes recently. The Ontario Arts Council, our principal conduit for support to artists and the broader arts sector, launched its new strategic plan in 2014.¹⁷ The Ontario Trillium Foundation introduced its new investment strategy in 2015, focusing on six action areas to improve and enrich people's lives.¹⁸ The Culture Strategy builds on and complements these initiatives, as well as the business planning work of all of our partner agencies.



Photo provided by the Ontario Science Centre.

RBC Bluesfest in Ottawa.
Photo by Steve Gerecke.

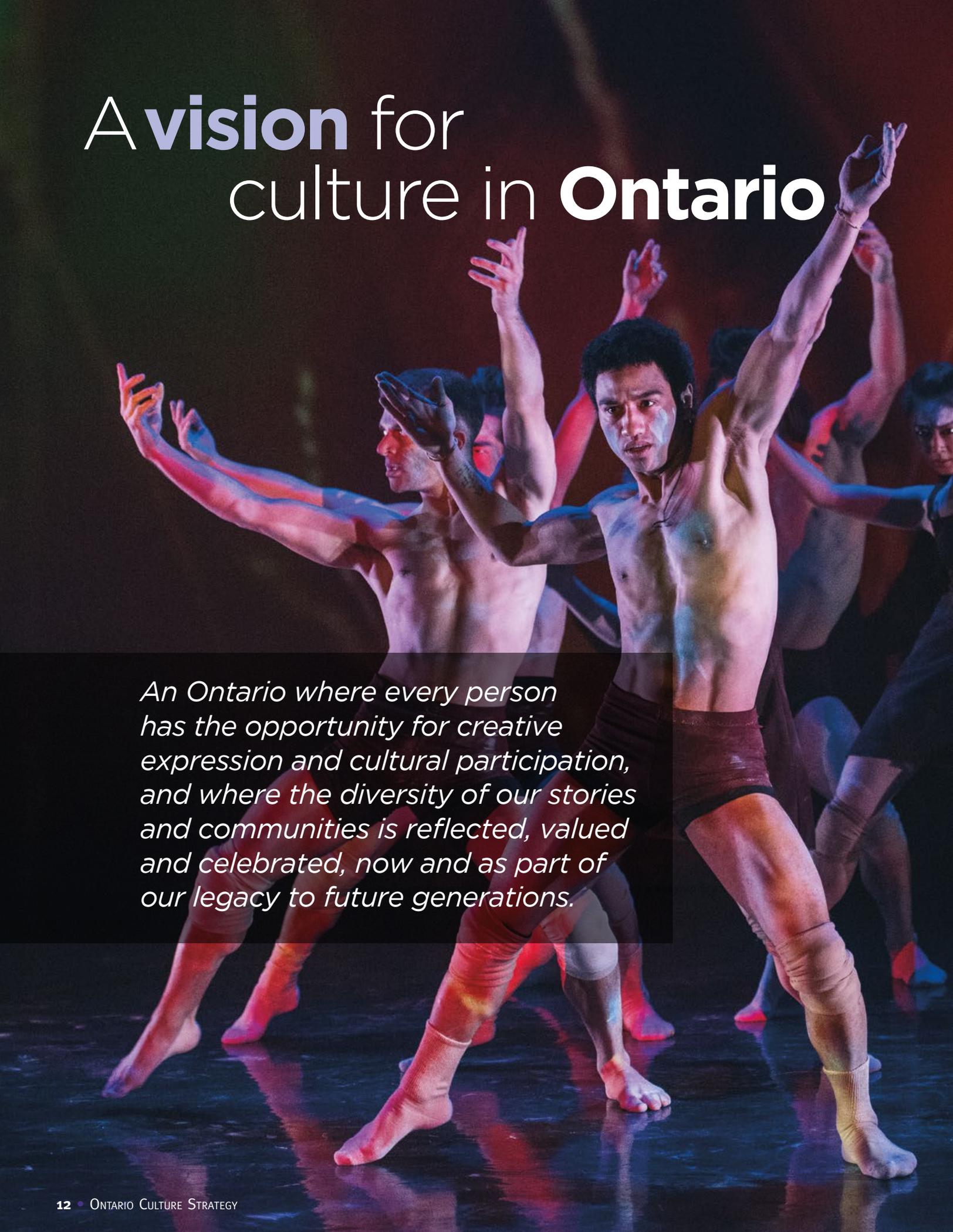


Culture and tourism agencies and attractions

Ontario's culture and tourism agencies and attractions are centres of excellence and innovation. For residents and visitors, they offer opportunities for learning, recreation, enjoyment and entertainment.

- Art Gallery of Ontario
- Fort William Historical Park
- Huronia Historical Parks
- McMichael Canadian Art Collection
- Metro Toronto Convention Centre
- Niagara Parks Commission
- Ontario Arts Council
- Ontario Heritage Trust
- Ontario Library Service - North
- Ontario Media Development Corporation
- Ontario Place Corporation
- Ontario Science Centre
- Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Ottawa Convention Centre
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Royal Ontario Museum
- Science North
- Southern Ontario Library Service
- St. Lawrence Parks Commission

A **vision** for culture in **Ontario**



An Ontario where every person has the opportunity for creative expression and cultural participation, and where the diversity of our stories and communities is reflected, valued and celebrated, now and as part of our legacy to future generations.



Principles to guide government support for culture

Creativity and innovation

Culture exposes us to new ideas and inspires new ways of thinking. Support for culture should help to nourish and reward creativity, exploration, experimentation and innovation.

Quality of life and economic development

Culture contributes significantly to both quality of life and economic development in Ontario. Support for culture should help to enrich our lives, strengthen and animate our communities and build a dynamic business environment in Ontario.

Diversity and inclusion

Ontario's rich diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We should all have the opportunity to participate in Ontario's diverse cultural life, regardless of age, background, language, ability or where we live in the province. Support for culture should recognize people with disabilities and people who are Deaf as cultural and linguistic communities with unique identities, experiences and values.

Respect for Indigenous peoples

Indigenous cultures, languages and heritage represent distinct identities, histories and ways of life. Ontario is committed to reconciliation by strengthening and transforming its relationship with Indigenous communities and by implementing changes that reflect Indigenous priorities.

Collaboration and partnerships

The talents and contributions of many people and organizations make our culture sector strong and vibrant. Support for culture should encourage collaboration and partnerships among provincial ministries and agencies; municipal, provincial/territorial, federal and Indigenous partners; not-for-profit arts and culture organizations; the private sector; and all communities and individuals.

Public value and accountability

Government investment in culture should be guided by what Ontarians value and by what makes a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities. This ministry, its agencies and the organizations we fund are accountable for achieving the best possible outcomes within available resources.



Goal 1:

Promote cultural engagement and inclusion

Focus on removing barriers and increasing opportunities for cultural participation

Lead Storyteller and Cultural Elder from Debajehmujig Storytellers crossing the New Meuse river in Rotterdam, as The Global Savages bring their stories to Europe. Photo by Peter Van Beek.



Our first goal flows directly from our vision for culture — an Ontario where every person has the opportunity for creative expression and cultural participation.

In our engagement process, we heard from members of some communities who still experience barriers to accessing culture funding and to participating fully in the cultural life of our province, including people from Indigenous, Francophone, and ethno-cultural communities, people with disabilities, people who are Deaf, and people living in rural and remote areas of the province. We need to do better at removing barriers and increasing opportunities for everyone.

There are many inclusive practices that we can learn from and build on. The following are just a few examples from our agencies and attractions to show the range of programs aimed at reaching out to and including all of Ontario's communities:

- The Ontario Heritage Trust has created an online gallery and educational resources to promote greater understanding of Franco-Ontarian heritage.
- The Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum have recently partnered with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship to pilot their Ahlan welcome program which connects newcomers with cultural attractions, experiences and people in their communities.¹⁹
- Science North delivers science programs for Northern and Indigenous communities, including five remote communities it serves by chartered plane through a partnership with Northern Nishnawbe Education Council.
- In 2015-16, the Ontario Arts Council established its first Deaf and Disability Arts Projects program to support projects by artists who are Deaf or who have a disability.
- The McMichael Canadian Art Collection developed and shared its guide, "The Art of Inclusion," a seven-step process for designing and delivering accessible programs in arts and culture organizations.

Active engagement with arts and culture has enormous benefits for people of all abilities and at all stages of life. During Culture Talks, parents, educators and many others stressed the importance of arts and culture in education, not only for their intrinsic value but also for their role in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support success in school, in life and in the future workforce. The arts also provide engaging and innovative ways to teach many other subjects, including math and science.

The Ministry of Education is an important partner in providing opportunities for cultural engagement for children and youth — from its guiding document for early years curriculum development²⁰ and its policy for French-language schools²¹ to the provincial curriculum (Kindergarten to Grade 12), which provides a foundation for appreciation of arts and culture, to the Pathways to Success program for high school students who want to build careers in culture.²² The ministry's renewed vision for education promotes a learning environment that respects and values Ontario's cultural diversity, creating a space where diversity is recognized as a contributor to success. In collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and education partners, the Ministry of Education is also developing a plan to incorporate Indigenous histories and cultures into the mandatory public education curriculum.²³

Ontario's agencies and attractions offer a wide range of programs to complement the school curriculum and programs. The Ontario Arts Council supports arts programming and activities in school and community settings through its Artists in Education, Aboriginal Artists in Schools, Artists in Residence (Education), and Arts Education Projects and Organizations programs. The Royal Ontario Museum's Youth Cabinet brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to develop online museum content. The Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service — North coordinate Club Amick, a book club for First Nation children attending Kindergarten to Grade 6 in Ontario's remote communities.

Museums, galleries, public libraries and other arts and culture organizations also provide engaging educational and intergenerational learning experiences, co-op placements, summer employment and volunteer opportunities for people of all ages. The availability of arts and culture activities helps to build age-friendly communities. For seniors, there is a strong connection between cultural engagement and general well-being and active living.

Over the next two decades, Ontario will experience a large demographic shift, with the number of seniors expected to double by 2036.²⁴ The Ontario government has been working with agencies, stakeholders, regions and municipalities to create initiatives to support older adults to remain active contributors to the cultural life of our communities.

We are also working on laying the foundation for developing a more formal and lasting relationship with Indigenous communities to engage on a broad range of cultural interests and priorities. We want to open up a meaningful dialogue to explore together how we can support Indigenous cultures, nourish cultural vitality and promote the contributions of Indigenous cultures to all Ontarians and the world. We also want to help facilitate stronger relationships between Indigenous communities and museums and other culture organizations.

This goal reflects our commitment to inclusion with strategies to further reduce barriers and encourage greater participation in culture by all communities, inspire the next generation, and strengthen our relationship with Indigenous communities.



Dear Sudbury mural by Danielle Daniel.
Photo by Danielle Daniel.

Strategy 1

Reduce barriers and encourage greater participation in culture

- Bring together Ontario government granting partners to share best practices and increase access and inclusion throughout the application and assessment process, and ensure that representatives of communities who may face barriers to accessing culture funding are actively involved in the discussions, including Indigenous, Francophone and ethno-cultural communities, people with disabilities and people who are Deaf, and people living in rural and remote areas.
- Continue to support culture agencies, organizations and other partners to remove barriers for people with disabilities and people who are Deaf to increase opportunities for creation and participation in arts and culture.
- Identify and promote ways to increase opportunities for Ontario's seniors to engage with arts and culture in their communities in many different ways, including as artists, mentors, volunteers and participants.

Strategy 2

Inspire the next generation and help youth build careers in the culture sector

- Continue to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between the culture and education sectors to increase opportunities for participation in arts and culture and learning through the arts.
- Develop a new fund to support publishers in creating curriculum-linked learning resources aimed at fostering the use of diverse Canadian content in schools.
- Build new community partnerships to support high school students interested in further learning or exploring careers in arts and culture by offering more Specialist High Skills Major and co-op placements, dual credit programs and other opportunities available through the Ministry of Education's Pathways to Success program.
- Continue to support Ontario's culture agencies, attractions and organizations in offering opportunities for children and youth to engage with arts and culture and in promoting youth engagement in the heritage sector.
- Support youth cultural camps in Indigenous communities to build leadership and promote awareness of traditional knowledge and languages through daily hands-on activities.



On the set of the Canadian Film Centre's short film *Oliver Bump's Birthday*, from director Jordan Canning. Photo by Krystina Pucci, provided by the Canadian Film Centre.

Strategy 3

Strengthen our relationships with Indigenous communities and work toward reconciliation

- In collaboration with Indigenous peoples, establish an ongoing dialogue to address shared culture priorities, such as preservation of Indigenous cultural heritage and languages and participation in all aspects of Ontario's cultural life.
- Help facilitate cross-cultural understanding between First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and museums and other culture organizations to create stronger relationships and partnerships.
- Provide an Indigenous Cultural Revitalization Fund to support cultural activities in Indigenous communities, with the goals of revitalizing cultural practices, raising awareness of the vitality of Indigenous cultures in Ontario and promoting reconciliation.

Expected results

- There will be fewer barriers to accessing culture funding.
- People of all ages and abilities will have more opportunities to engage with arts and culture.
- Youth will have more information and supports available to help them pursue careers in the culture sector.
- There will be stronger relationships between Indigenous communities, the province and culture organizations to support Indigenous culture priorities.



Goal 2:

Strengthen culture in communities

Focus on strengthening
community-based arts,
culture and heritage

5



This goal focuses on strengthening culture where most of us experience it — close to home, in our communities. The places we live are one type of community. Other communities are formed by the bonds people share through history and identity.

Municipalities are key partners in supporting local arts, culture and heritage. Over the past decade, 69 municipalities, representing nearly three-quarters of Ontario's population, have developed cultural plans to integrate culture into local decision-making and help achieve broader priorities like creating jobs and promoting tourism. Some First Nations and Métis communities have also identified and documented their cultural resources and developed cultural plans to help preserve and revitalize their distinct heritage and languages.

Municipalities play a key role in preserving our cultural heritage. Under the Ontario Heritage Act, they designate properties or areas that are of value to their communities to conserve them for future generations. Under provincial planning legislation, municipalities protect cultural heritage and archaeological sites and must consider the interests of Indigenous communities in the process.

Archaeological sites can include the remains of Indigenous settlements, battlefields such as those from the War of 1812, pioneer settlements and shipwrecks. More than 80 per cent of Ontario's archaeological sites are Indigenous in origin and some sites are more than 10,000 years old. Archaeological artifacts like fragments of pottery and stone, arrowheads and pipes tell us a great deal about the lives of the people who left them behind.

All of Ontario's culture agencies support cultural vitality in communities through programs for all ages: the Ontario Trillium Foundation invests in community-based initiatives to enrich people's lives through arts, culture and heritage; the Ontario Heritage Trust identifies, protects, renews and promotes Ontario's heritage in all its forms — cultural and natural, tangible and intangible; and the Ontario Arts Council supports and nourishes professional artists and arts organizations in communities throughout the province. Its programs also focus on under-served or under-represented communities, including Northern, Indigenous and Francophone communities, youth, artists who are Deaf, artists with disabilities, and arts professionals of colour.²⁵

Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site.
Photo provided by the Ontario Heritage Trust.

This goal complements the work of our agencies by focusing on public libraries, First Nation public libraries and heritage organizations, which the ministry funds directly. It aims to build the capacity of all not-for-profit arts and culture organizations and to continue supporting the volunteers who dedicate their time to sustaining culture.

Our 265 public libraries and 45 First Nation public libraries serve over 99 per cent of Ontario's population. They are supported by the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service - North, which provide coordination, training and program delivery. In addition to making printed and digital resources available, public libraries have become essential spaces for access to cultural experiences, technology and community life. Libraries offer important services like education opportunities, employment and small business support, newcomer programs and access to government information.

Community museums, historical societies, historic sites, archives and other heritage organizations conserve and promote our cultural heritage through their collections, interpretive displays and diverse programming. They act as research centres and community spaces for public education, dialogue and knowledge-sharing. Ontario has museums devoted to science and technology, television, planes, trains, fashion, textiles, shoes, canoes, dance, theatre, sports and more.



This goal also recognizes that sharing and celebrating our diverse cultures enrich our lives, build cross-cultural understanding, and encourage us to take pride in where we live and what we have accomplished together. An example on a grand scale is the arts and culture festival that accompanied the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. Over 38 days, more than 1.4 million residents and visitors participated in arts and culture events, including music, theatre, dance, visual arts and fashion.

Ontario's culture and tourism attractions like the Art Gallery of Ontario, Huronia Historical Parks and Fort William Historical Park work with Indigenous partners to deliver compelling programming for residents and visitors. They help increase

our understanding of Indigenous histories and cultures and celebrate the vitality of Indigenous artistic expressions, including modern Indigenous music and visual arts. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in our engagement process called for more opportunities to learn about and appreciate Indigenous cultures.

This goal builds on the work of our agencies and attractions and many other partners and organizations. Its strategies aim to strengthen community-based culture organizations, conserve and promote Ontario's diverse cultural heritage, and connect people and communities through sharing and celebrating our diverse heritage and cultures.

Strategy 1

Help build strong community-based culture organizations

- Work with government partners and culture stakeholders to maximize the use of public libraries, museums, galleries and other culture facilities as community hubs and explore opportunities to integrate arts and culture activities and spaces into schools and other community facilities.
- Review and update provincial funding programs for public libraries to build the capacity of libraries serving rural and remote communities, improve digital services and support leadership and innovation.
- Work with First Nation public libraries to better understand their unique needs and identify opportunities for responding through improved supports.
- Review and update provincial funding programs for community museums and heritage organizations to build capacity, strengthen leadership and support more diverse organizations.
- Collaborate on the continued implementation of the Ontario Volunteer Action Plan²⁶ and promote the Partnership Grant Program,²⁷ which helps build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector, including arts and culture organizations.



Elgin Theatre. Photo by Peter Luszytk.

Strategy 2

Conserve and promote Ontario's diverse cultural heritage

- Help heritage property owners use clean, low carbon technologies, and enable the province to develop and share expertise on heritage and energy conservation, by leveraging opportunities for energy efficiency improvements through Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan.
- Provide online access to information about Ontario's cultural heritage, including designated heritage properties and provincial heritage properties.
- Develop additional tools to help communities identify and protect their cultural heritage, including guidance on cultural heritage landscapes, cultural planning, and the interests of Indigenous communities in conserving cultural heritage, to support municipalities in implementing the Provincial Policy Statement (2014).²⁸
- Work with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and heritage organizations to support local archives to promote, preserve and facilitate access to Ontario's diverse documentary memory for current and future generations.
- Work with Indigenous partners, archaeologists, museums and other stakeholders to develop a framework to improve conservation of archaeological artifacts so that current and future generations can learn about and understand our past.
- Review the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists to reflect the evolving practice of archaeology in land use and development contexts, including the engagement of Indigenous communities and the care of artifacts.

Strategy 3

Connect people and communities by sharing and celebrating our diverse heritage and cultures

- Bring together culture and tourism agencies and attractions and Indigenous partners to increase public awareness and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultural heritage, knowledge and ongoing contributions to arts and culture in Ontario.
- Collaborate with sport and recreation partners to explore more opportunities to integrate cultural engagement into community recreation and sport, and to encourage cultural celebrations as a part of multi-sport games held in Ontario.
- Celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary with special programming through our culture agencies, all year long, to highlight the important role of arts and culture in the rich history of our province and our country.
- Continue to engage with the Government of Québec to facilitate and foster information exchanges, work collaboratively on common issues and develop joint projects under the Agreement for Cooperation on Culture between the Government of Ontario and the Government of Québec relating to the arts, cultural industries,²⁹ public libraries and heritage.

Expected results

- There will be more recognition and use of public libraries and other culture facilities as community hubs.
- Ontarians will gain greater understanding of cultural heritage conservation and there will be more tools to assist in conserving Ontario's unique cultural heritage.

- Funding will be targeted to support a greater diversity of organizations and key priorities (e.g., digital services).
- Cultural heritage conservation will be more inclusive of Indigenous communities and perspectives.
- Ontarians will be more aware of Indigenous contributions to arts and culture in the province.

Goal 3:

Fuel the creative economy

Focus on maximizing the contributions of the creative economy to Ontario's cultural vitality and economic prosperity

Members of Kobo Town perform at the opening night of Lulaworld in Toronto.
Photo by Anna Encheva.



All parts of Ontario's culture sector contribute to a strong creative economy: professional artists; the cultural industries (including film and television production, interactive digital media, music recording and performance, and book and magazine publishing); the wider creative industries (like architecture, design, fashion, advertising, broadcasting and industries that support them); and Ontario's cultural institutions, organizations, galleries, science centres, museums, heritage sites, festivals and events.

Companies and workers in the creative economy develop, create, produce, perform and present world-class work and compelling experiences, supply creative services or fill supporting knowledge-based roles. Their economic impact resonates throughout the province in the thriving interactive digital media sector in Southwestern Ontario, the vibrant fashion district in Toronto, the award-winning theatre community in Stratford and the growing film and television production industry in Sudbury.

Some components of the creative sector have a global reach, such as our entrepreneurial Ontario Science Centre and Science North, which have been exporting their creative services and products for more than two decades. To build on our success, we need to remain competitive nationally and grow the economic and cultural impact of our creative sector internationally.

The creative economy is expected to become even more important to Ontario's prosperity as we continue to shift from a manufacturing and resource-based economy to one dependent on knowledge and innovation. Digital content is constantly evolving and introducing new possibilities, such as augmented and virtual reality. Digital technology and distribution are creating new opportunities for our artists and creative-sector entrepreneurs and transforming the traditional cultural industries.

Ontario's postsecondary, training and research institutions, like OCAD University, York University's 3D Film Innovation Consortium, the Canadian Film Centre, and Sheridan College with its Screen Industries Research and Training Centre partnership, lead the way in responding to these changes by incubating cutting-edge technologies and developing exceptional creative talent.

In the knowledge economy, people are Ontario's most important resource. Now and for the future, we need a cultural workforce with the technical skills to

address the challenges and maximize the opportunities presented by a global digital economy. Culture workers, whether they are independent artists, entrepreneurs or leaders of arts and culture organizations, also need business skills to succeed in an increasingly competitive arena. Ontario's diversity is our key competitive strength and our cultural workforce must reflect our diversity by actively engaging members of Indigenous, ethno-cultural and Deaf and disability communities, as well as newcomers to Ontario.

Ontario is well positioned for success in this dynamic environment. The Ontario Arts Council provides funding to Ontario's professional artists and arts organizations, supporting their contributions to the cultural vitality and economic prosperity of Ontario. Arts, culture and the creative industries are identified as a priority economic sector in the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation³⁰ provides funding to film and television productions that create jobs and training opportunities for Northern residents.

The Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC) provides business development services and funding for growth for our cultural industries and seeks out investment opportunities for the province. It acts as the hub of Ontario's creative economy, brokering international deals at OMDC's International Financing Forum during the Toronto International Film Festival, supporting industry-led initiatives like Interactive Ontario's GameON: Ventures, and Magazines Canada's MagNet Conference, managing the Ontario Music Office and Ontario Film Commission, and celebrating Ontario authors through the annual Trillium Book Award and *Prix littéraire Trillium*. Ontario also offers over \$400 million in cultural media tax credits to attract investment and jobs to our province and supports the wider creative industries through its broader economic agenda.

This goal builds on this support and on the work of many other partners and organizations. Its strategies focus on making Ontario a culture leader, at home and internationally, and on strengthening Ontario's culture workforce.



On the set of the Canadian Film Centre's feature film *Molly Maxwell*, from director Sara St. Onge. Photo provided by the Canadian Film Centre.

Strategy 1

Make Ontario a culture leader at home and internationally

- With the permanent Ontario Music Fund as a foundation, continue to build Ontario as a leading North American centre for music production and performance, as well as spur music tourism by setting a vision and directions to further the development of the Ontario Live Music Strategy.
- Continue to work with Ontario's growing interactive digital media companies to build a globally competitive industry that can innovate and succeed in the next generation of interactive entertainment, including video games, augmented and virtual reality, mobile content and cross-platform storytelling.
- Establish a public/private film and television industry advisory panel to examine priority issues facing the industry and collaborate on strategies to promote the growth, innovation and global expansion of Ontario's film and television sector.
- Help ensure Ontario's competitiveness as a top production jurisdiction by modernizing the suite of tax credits for screen-based productions.
- Seek opportunities to grow the culture sector within the framework of the Business Growth Initiative by working with partner ministries to foster innovation and help scale up companies:
 - Explore the development of entrepreneurship and commercialization programs designed for the arts and cultural industries, including the promotion of partnerships between firms and across sectors to share risk and maximize expertise.
 - Explore the development of risk capital programs, designed with an entertainment focus, that reflect the business models and rapid product development cycles of the arts and cultural industries.
 - Attract investment that increases Ontario's productivity, creativity and global competitiveness in the culture sector.
 - Explore opportunities to strengthen the use of design as a key competitive advantage in the knowledge economy, for example by promoting the application of design in manufacturing and technology.
 - Accelerate the creation and adoption of new disruptive technologies³¹ to strengthen the culture sector's role in the knowledge economy.
- Work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and other ministries to inform the development of a long-term infrastructure plan for Ontario to better understand and work toward addressing the needs of the culture sector.
- Collaborate with government partners and the tourism industry to identify opportunities to grow cultural tourism in Ontario, including Francophone tourism and Indigenous-led tourism, and offer authentic and compelling visitor experiences.
- Continue to engage with the federal government to help ensure the health of Ontario's broadcasting and production industries.

Strategy 2

Strengthen Ontario's culture workforce

- Develop a better understanding of the impact of the digital transformation on culture and as a first step work with partners to organize a digital culture symposium to bring together stakeholders from all culture sectors to share experiences and expertise, build capacity to address digital challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.
- Increase awareness and uptake of the Canada-Ontario Job Grant³² among employers in the culture sector to assist them in developing their workforces through employer-led digital skills and other training.
- Help ensure that Ontario's culture workforce is positioned to succeed in the knowledge economy by creating opportunities to enhance technical and business skills training and foster learning opportunities for arts and culture sector students and workers, for example through experiential learning, including internships and mentorships, and other forms of professional and skills development.
- Explore ways for provincial and federal immigration programs to contribute to the growth and success of Ontario's culture sector and eliminate barriers to the successful integration of cultural workers.
- Engage federal, provincial and territorial culture partners on strategies to improve the socioeconomic status of artists and to improve support for culture-related infrastructure.



Selection of books shortlisted for the 2016 Trillium Book Award/*Prix littéraire Trillium*. Photo by Andy Schoenhofer and Rebecca Langstaff.



Virtual reality headset. Photo provided by the Canadian Film Centre.

Expected results

- The Ontario government will develop more effective tools to help our culture sector compete in the digital world.
- There will be more opportunities for Ontario government/industry collaboration to drive cultural industry productivity, innovation and exports.
- There will be better coordination throughout the Ontario government to integrate the cultural industries into Ontario's broader economic agenda.
- More Ontarians will be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to the creative economy.

Goal 4:

Promote the value of the arts throughout government



Focus on enhancing the profile of the arts sector across government for the benefit of the sector and all Ontarians

A Fuzion drawing workshop at Creative Works Studio, an Inner City Health Program of St. Michael's Hospital. Photo by Marlena Zuber.

Jurisdictions around the world have recognized that, in addition to their important intrinsic value, the arts contribute to our lives and our communities in many other ways. Ontario has more than 58,000 professional artists working in over 200 communities across the province. We will promote the contributions of artists and the broader arts sector throughout the Ontario government with an Arts Policy Framework. The Framework will build on the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, which recognizes artists' invaluable contributions to Ontario's economy, quality of life and sense of identity.

Ontario's diverse arts sector comprises:

- Professional and amateur artists, including Indigenous and Francophone artists, artists who are Deaf and artists with disabilities
- Both not-for-profit and commercial arts organizations, including facilities such as theatres, galleries and studios
- Community arts councils and service and trade associations
- Disciplines such as dance, literary arts, music, theatre, visual arts, media arts, multidisciplinary arts, and new art forms and practices often inspired by digital possibilities
- A large supporting workforce, including technicians, administrators, fundraisers, marketers and many others
- Thousands of volunteers who assist arts organizations and provide leadership as board members
- Arts educators and educational institutions and organizations



Frank Gehry's sculptural staircase at the AGO.
Photo by the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The Arts Policy Framework will help increase awareness within government of the size, scope and diversity of Ontario's arts sector and of the many opportunities available to integrate the arts into a range of policy and program areas. In turn, this will create new opportunities for artists and arts organizations to engage with other sectors. The Framework will also encourage and support government ministries and agencies to consider the needs and potential contributions of artists and arts organizations when they develop or review policies and programs.

The Framework will provide a toolkit to all Ontario ministries and agencies that will include facts about Ontario's arts sector, links to key sector organizations and associations, best practices and case studies, information on monitoring and measuring outcomes and links to additional resources.

Strategy

Inspire greater integration of the arts into public policy and programs

- Develop an Arts Policy Framework in collaboration with Ontario's culture agencies, actively promote the Framework to government ministries and agencies and monitor how well it is working.

One example of integrating the arts with other sectors is the Creative Engagement Fund to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment in Ontario.³³ The Ontario Women's Directorate has partnered with the Ontario Arts Council to deliver the \$2.25 million fund. Professional artists, not-for-profit community organizations and sexual violence experts are collaborating to address the issues at the heart of sexual violence and harassment. By stimulating discussion, transforming perspectives, and offering new tools to name and take action on sexual violence and harassment, the fund's artistic projects will help us imagine a better and healthier future. These are three of the 11 successful applicants to date, announced in May 2016:

- FESFO (*Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne*) is leading a project called "It's Never Okay for Franco-Ontarian Youth," a multidisciplinary arts program to engage Franco-Ontarian youth in dialogue and action on sexual violence and harassment.
- LAMPHEAD is delivering a youth-led video animation project called "Get Consent" to explore the issue of consent and offer youth in downtown Toronto practical skills to make sure they have positive, healthy relationships.
- The Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society's "Witness" project is exploring, through dance, video and theatre performances, the stories of refugee women who have experienced sexual violence.

Expected results

- The Arts Policy Framework will be a catalyst for creative and innovative integration of the arts to advance Ontario's social and economic objectives.
- Awareness of Ontario's diverse arts community will be increased within the Ontario government and its agencies.
- Ontario government ministries and agencies will have more tools to consider the needs and contributions of artists and arts organizations in their policies and programs.
- Artists and arts organizations will have new opportunities to engage with other sectors in government.

Moving forward



Great Lake Swimmers perform as part of *Live at Massey Hall*.
Photo provided by Massey Hall/Roy Thomson Hall.

Implementing the Culture Strategy

The Culture Strategy contains actions to guide the government's support for culture over the next five years. We can implement some actions in the short term, within the next one to two years. Two examples are bringing together government granting partners to share best practices and increase access and inclusion (Goal 1) and working with First Nation public libraries to better understand their unique needs (Goal 2).

Others actions will take longer because they require more input from partner ministries, agencies and stakeholders, engagement

with Indigenous partners and communities and other levels of government, or policy and program development. Examples include developing a framework to improve conservation of archaeological artifacts (Goal 2) and seeking opportunities to grow the culture sector within the framework of the Business Growth Initiative (Goal 3).

In the next phase of this initiative, we will develop a plan to guide the implementation of the Culture Strategy and track our progress in meeting its commitments.

Measuring and reporting on progress

The expected results for each goal in the Culture Strategy provide a broad idea of what we want to achieve. As we implement the Strategy, we will develop objectives that are more specific, along with performance measures for individual actions. In five years, we will publish a special progress report on the implementation of the Culture Strategy. This will allow us to take stock of what we have accomplished and what we still need to achieve.

Our agencies undertake their own planning processes to respond to changes and emerging needs and set their courses for the future. The Ontario Arts Council's "Vital Arts and Public Value: A Blueprint for 2014-2020" and the Ontario Trillium Foundation's new investment strategy, mentioned earlier, are two examples. All provincial agencies report on their activities through business plans, financial reports and annual reports. In addition, all agencies' mandates undergo review at least every seven years to ensure that they are consistent with government priorities and policy objectives.

Continuing the dialogue

The Culture Strategy public engagement process began a conversation about the future of arts and culture in Ontario. Implementation of the Strategy will establish new channels of communication to continue the dialogue.

We will seek input from stakeholders and Indigenous partners about proposed changes at key implementation points, such

as when we review funding programs and when we develop a framework to improve conservation of archaeological artifacts.

New avenues for in-depth discussion introduced in the Strategy include the public/private advisory panel to examine priority issues facing the film and television industry and an ongoing dialogue with Indigenous communities to address culture priorities.

Opportunities to collaborate, learn, exchange ideas and share expertise are other important ways for us to continue the dialogue and stimulate action. Culture and tourism agencies and attractions and Indigenous partners will explore ways to raise public awareness about Indigenous histories and contributions to arts and culture and the digital symposium for the culture sector will focus on sharing knowledge and strategies.

We learned a great deal through Culture Talks. As we implement Ontario's Culture Strategy, continuing the dialogue will assist us in achieving the goals Ontarians helped us set. We will engage a great many individuals, partners, organizations and communities in that dialogue. By encouraging and facilitating broader collaboration and partnerships, the Culture Strategy will be a catalyst for renewed creative and economic energy in the culture sector and in communities across Ontario.



Children learning about the Jewish holiday, Purim. Photo provided by Bonnechere Union Public Library.

Endnotes

- 1 The Canadian Hearing Society's definition of "Culturally Deaf" refers to "individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture and community of Deaf people, based on a sign language." Canadian Hearing Society. Glossary of Terms.
- 2 Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "Culture Talks: A Summary of What We Heard from Ontarians." April 27, 2016.
- 3 In this document, we use "culture" or "arts and culture" to underscore that we are talking about culture in its broadest sense, including but not exclusively meaning creative expressions related to cultural identity. The arts include craft, dance, literary arts, media arts, music, opera, theatre, visual arts and many creative combinations of these disciplines.
- 4 Jon Hawkes. "The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning." Cultural Development Network (Vic). 2001. See also Sustainable Kingston. "Four Pillars of Sustainability." Sustainable Kingston.
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- 7 Preservation Green Lab. "The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse." National Trust for Historical Preservation. 2011.
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- 21 Ministry of Education. "Politique d'aménagement linguistique de l'Ontario pour l'éducation en langue française." 2004. This document is the Ministry of Education's distinct educational policy for Ontario's French-language schools.
- 22 Ministry of Education. "Specialist High Skills Major Policy and Implementation Guide." 2014. In 2016-17, the Specialist High Skills Major program is being expanded to train students in skills identified as valuable in today's economy, including innovative thinking, problem solving, creativity and entrepreneurship.
- 23 Ontario. "Ontario Implementing New Indigenous Training and Education Requirements." February 17, 2016.
- 24 Ontario. Seniors.
- 25 The Ontario Arts Council's definition of "arts professionals of colour" is based on the Government of Canada's definition of "visible minorities," which is "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."
- 26 Ontario. "Ontario's Volunteer Action Plan."
- 27 Grants Ontario.
- 28 Ministry of Municipal Affairs. "Land Use Planning: Provincial Policy Statement." 2014.
- 29 Cultural industries include film and television production, interactive digital media (e.g., video games, apps), the music industry and book and magazine publishing.
- 30 Ontario. Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.
- 31 A "disruptive technology" is an innovative product or process that displaces established technology and may challenge existing firms or create a completely new industry.
- 32 Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. "Canada-Ontario Job Grant."
- 33 Ontario Arts Council. Creative Engagement Fund.

Culture is passing on deep and rich cultural traditions, including folk culture practices and arts. It is teachings and customs. It is human and natural history. It is a healing component of life. It is processing the past and creating a new better future by admitting what is difficult from the past and moving toward healing. Culture is what differentiates somewhere from anywhere. It contributes to sense of place and state of mind. It makes places vibrant and unique. It is the cultural heritage of the community over time. It is key to city building and transformation. It is the strong ties that bind physical place to human experience and vice versa. Culture determines the success and greatness of societies. It is gathering and celebrating together as a community. Culture is the heart of a community. It is about family and friends. It is being able to participate freely, safely and joyously in family traditions. It is being able to participate freely in political discourse. It is a shared experience. It is a joyful community. Culture is our relationship with the environment. It is connection to the land, water, medicine, fish, food and everything we do. It is awareness of the natural environment. For Northern Indigenous communities, cultural heritage broadly reflects language, economy, spirituality and deeply personal relationships with landscapes. It is the core of contemporary communities who are struggling to survive in a rapidly changing world. Culture is inclusion. It is enriched by diversity. It is personal culture and heritage. It is ethnicity. It is multiculturalism. It is how we connect with and learn about one another. Culture is the telling of our stories, and the listening to others' stories and finding points of intersection, commonalities and the universalities of the human spirit and the human endeavour. Culture should not be understood as the stories we tell, but the relationships we have. Culture means something different to every Ontarian. The way that each and every Ontarian lives their day-to-day life defines part of our culture. Culture presents a vision of human experience. It provides hope and a sense of belonging. It allows us to dream of the future.

Cover art • *Nightless Night* by Lora Northway



Thunder Bay artist Lora Northway working on her mixed media painting *Nightless Night*, 2014 © copyright. Photo by Dee Laroque.

Lora Northway is an exhibiting artist, arts educator and curator in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She received her Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts from Lakehead University and a Certificate in Arts Education from York University. Inspired by her family's immigration to Canada in 1901, her stylistic references include Finnish textiles, pattern and myth, with a local and contemporary vernacular.

Alongside her studio practice, she is a co-coordinator for Definitely Superior Artist-Run Centre (Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts winner), founder of the Die Active Art Collective, Neechee Studio Indigenous Youth Collective, and co-founder of inVISIBLEink LGBTQ youth collective. She has received numerous awards and grants, including the Ontario Arts Council Emerging Artist and Northern Arts grants. She also developed and delivered a conference on "Youth Arts Engagement in the North" for 25 Indigenous youth leaders from Northern communities.

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