

The Culture Sector

- Across Canada there are 700,000 people earning their living in cultural occupations with a direct and indirect impact of \$20 billion.¹ Culture accounts for 5.2 percent of the Canadian labourforce.²
- Between 1990 and 1997, the Canadian culture sector grew by 14 percent, outpacing such key sectors as the automotive and agriculture.³
- In New Brunswick the culture sector contributed 2.33 percent of the GDP. This exceeds mining (1.68%), logging and forestry (1.2%), and fishing and trapping (0.92%).⁴
- Culture is the fastest growing sector in New Brunswick, with a growth rate in employment at 12.2 percent at a time when employment for all the other sectors increased only 3.6 percent.⁵
- The culture sector contributes directly and indirectly close to 20,000 jobs in New Brunswick.⁶
- The culture sector is highly educated; 77 percent have post-secondary education; 41 percent hold degrees compared to a 17 percent average holding degrees across all industries.⁷
- There is strong public support for culture. In 1997, approximately 452,000 Canadians volunteered their time to support arts and heritage groups.⁸ In a recent public survey conducted in Ontario, 92 percent said the arts enriched the quality of their life, and 87 percent said their communities would lose something of value if they lost their culture sector.⁹

Culture is a leading economic sector with a distinctive characteristic. Cultural workers are entrepreneurs. Fifty percent of the culture workforce, in some sub-sectors over 80 percent, are either contract workers or self-employed.¹⁰ Because of this, the culture sector is regarded as a prototype for the future of other sectors. Self-employment is rapidly growing in all sectors and as of 1997 had climbed to 18 percent in the Canadian workforce.¹¹

For any economic sector to retain its competitive edge, upgrading of the workforce is key. Government programs target assistance to keep the workforce up to date and competitive for most sectors. Culture, however, is largely excluded from such training because of its high numbers of self-employed. Most of the programs currently available require EI or social assistance eligibility, which excludes the self-employed.

The Adjustment Committee on Training in the Culture Sector

Mandate and methods

Devolution of responsibility for training from the federal government to the provincial resulted in the loss of designated funds to develop the culture sector through the Training Initiatives Program (TIP). The New Brunswick government did not designate the devolved funds by sector. The majority of appropriate training programs offered in our province require EI eligibility, which excludes most cultural workers. Employers in the culture sector, very small companies for the most part,¹² lack resources to provide upgrading for their employees. The culture sector, despite being the fastest growing sector in our province, will face difficulties in maintaining its level of activity and its competitive edge without more opportunity for upgrading and training.

In 1998, an ad hoc committee with ties to the New Brunswick Arts Board was formed by a group of concerned people in the cultural community. The Arts Board, applied for and received funding from the, then, Department of Advanced Education and Labour to establish an Adjustment Committee with a mandate to:

- work in partnership with Advanced Education and Labour to ensure access to training programs for cultural workers,
- define the training needs and the job market in culture and define strategies to meet these needs,
- provide research for future use by government departments as they address training in the culture sector, and
- make recommendations to improve employment opportunities for the New Brunswick culture workforce.

To achieve the mandate, the committee members agreed to review the accessibility by the culture sector to government-sponsored human resources programs both federally and provincially, consider initiatives taken in other provinces, and make recommendations for existing programs and for long-term approaches to benefit the culture sector and increase jobs for New Brunswickers. To gain information specific to New Brunswick, the committee sent out two questionnaires, for workers and employers, held consultation meetings in Edmundston, Caraquet, Fredericton, Saint John, Moncton, and Sackville, and gained additional input from the First Nations cultural community.

The committee prepared its report at a time when there were many shifts at the federal and provincial level affecting government departments and funding programs. Since some of the changes are still not settled at the time of writing, the committee requests readers to be aware that some of the details may no longer be accurate.

Abridged findings from the questionnaire and consultation meetings

The findings from the committee's questionnaire and consultation meetings clearly showed that the culture labour force in New Brunswick is not well informed about existing training possibilities. Those who sought information found that it was not always consistent and that the interpretation of eligibility criteria for programs seemed to vary by location. As a result, participants often cited the need for a single information outlet, a one-stop-shopping centre as it were, for information on training and job opportunities in the culture sector. Also noted was the need for a skills database to be used to determine training needs and for more current research and statistics on the culture sector.

Of the respondents to the questionnaire who were informed of existing programs, 70 percent felt that the programs did not meet their current needs. Only one percent felt the existing programs met the needs of the sector. Seventy-two percent stated a need for more training or upgrading, but the great majority felt they could not get it. Seventy-four percent of those responding to the questionnaire were self-employed, or engaged in contractual or part-time work. The area of training cited as most needed was in upgrading to meet new demands in their field. Technical skills (including those for new technologies) and business management skills were next, followed by transitional training (apprenticeships and mentorships).

Established culture workers identified their need for specialized training that is not available in New Brunswick, and their concern that funding is rarely available for out-of-province training. Mentoring and apprenticeships were regarded in all sub-sectors as effective transitional training not only for those beginning their careers, but also for those in mid-career expanding into new areas of work. However, potential employers, usually established artists, expected that they would lose money in the initial stages of this type of on-the-job training. Many suggested that mentors be paid.

A lack of information and help in preparing proposals were cited as significant impediments to obtaining assistance for training. A related concern was the administration of programs handled by civil servants who do not always have sufficient experience in the culture sector. There was frustration with information on programs arriving too late to allow effective matching of employers and employees, and the deadlines were seen as sometimes inappropriate to the seasonal schedules of the sector.

First Nations advisors to the committee spoke of the need for an aboriginal arts organisation to identify training requirements and advise on appropriate programs and workshops. Their particular concern was for workshops available to the youth in their community.

In the consultation sessions, it was noted that assistance for training volunteers is rarely an option for cultural organisations, even though volunteers are the backbone of most cultural events.

Findings from other provinces and the national level

The Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC) reports that 70 percent of culture workplaces have changed radically through new technology, but only 30 percent of the workers have had access to upgrading and new training. Those predominating in this 30 percent are employed by heritage institutions, government, or the cultural industries comprised of larger companies such as television, sound recording and graphics.

CHRC sees the loss of the federal Training Initiatives Program as having had a most harmful impact on the culture sector and in consequence has made two goals a priority: a national database on training and work opportunities, and the national delivery of training where it is the most efficient use of resources and appropriate to the mobile nature cultural workforce. CHRC identifies the greatest training needs to be specialised programs for the following: management for self-employment and micro-business, marketing skills for local and export markets, upgrading in new technology, on-the-job learning and mentorship, and professional training in design and new concepts.

Consultation with organisations involved with cultural human resource development in other provinces revealed several successful models for flexible delivery of programs appropriate to the sector. These precedents will be useful during the LMDA (Labour Market Development Agreement) negotiations between the New Brunswick and the federal governments. In some provinces, funds are designated for training initiatives for the culture sector, admissibility criteria are not tied to EI eligibility, and applications for training (in-province and out-of-province) are juried by a panel that includes professionals from the culture sector.

Successful initiatives in other provinces focus in five areas:

- transitional training provided through the Youth Initiative Program (YIP), administered by a cultural agency;
- information provided by websites and databases for training and job opportunities in conjunction with guidance provided by an advisory and liaison position;
- career self-management programs;
- training and development for artists' agents in disciplines including performing arts, fine arts and crafts;
- training programs for cultural industries designed through close communication between the implicated government departments and agencies and the local industries.

During consultation with other provinces, the agencies voiced concern about three persistent problems. First, the short-term nature of most funding programs has led to the collapse of several worthwhile initiatives. Second, the group identified as in greatest need of upgrading, the self-employed over thirty years old, have the least access to assistance from government or the private sector. Third, the effectiveness and suitability of programs are undermined when government does not consult adequately with the expertise available in the sector.

Recommendations

The present growth and economic contributions by the culture sector in New Brunswick will be undermined if the workforce cannot obtain upgrading especially to keep up with developments in new technology, changing market opportunities, and evolving design and conceptual trends. The committee recommends the following as a summary of the principles required to ensure a competitive workforce. The full report of the committee, available on request from the New Brunswick Arts Board, provides detailed recommendations on specific programs and proposed initiatives.

The Adjustment Committee on Training in the Culture Sector recommends:

1. That the Province recognise the economic contributions and potential in the culture sector and bring appropriate expertise to program policy development and administration through meaningful consultation with representative professional bodies in the sector.
2. That the Province invest in current statistical research to determine the impact of the culture sector on the economy and quality of life in New Brunswick, and ensure that the methodology used is appropriate to the sector.
3. That a position be funded for a liaison officer with the New Brunswick Arts Board, or another appropriate agency, to assist in developing coherent training programs, avoid overlap, and coordinate the dissemination of information.
4. That existing programs be revised and new programs, or new program-delivery methods, be established:
 - to make access to training programs available for the self-employed and contract workers in the culture sector, and
 - to facilitate access to advanced specialised training not available in the province.
5. That a sectoral training board be established, comprising representatives from government and the culture sector, with a mandate to advise on policy development regarding training, and to work closely with appropriate government departments on the administration and evaluation of applications to training programs.
6. That the universities and community colleges be provided incentives to offer management courses or series of workshops relevant to small businesses and not-for-profit organisations in the culture sector.

Members of the Adjustment Committee on Training in the Culture Sector

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The committee members acknowledge the contribution of Peter Thomas in preparing an in-depth report, titled *Before the Curtain Falls, Maintaining Creativity - Continuing Education for the Cultural Labour Force*. At the time of writing, the report is in English only and is available on request from:

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Endnotes

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1. Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. *Connecting to the Canadian Experience, Diversity, Creativity and Choice - the Government of Canada's Response to A Sense of Place, A Sense of Being* (1999), 9.
 2. Statistics Canada. *Canadian Labourforce Study* (1993).
 3. Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, 10.
 4. Statistics Canada. *Health and Vitality of the Culture Sector in New Brunswick* (1997), 20.
 5. Statistics Canada, ix.
 6. Statistics Canada, ix.
 7. Statistics Canada. *Cultural Labourforce Study* (1993).
 8. Statistics Canada. "Key Labour Market Trends." Presentation to the Standing Committee on Human Resources and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (February 1998), 10.
 9. Ontario Arts Council. *Making a Case for the Arts* (1996).
 10. Statistics Canada. *Cultural Labourforce Survey* (1993).
 11. Statistics Canada. "Key Labour Market Trends" (1998), 5.
 12. Cultural Human Resources Council. *Perspectives on Training in the Culture Sector*. (Pending publication 2001). Seventy percent of cultural businesses have fewer than four employees.