

The Megaphone

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meg·a·phone [meg-uh-fohn] –noun

1. a cone-shaped device for magnifying or directing the voice, chiefly used in addressing a large audience out of doors or in calling to someone at a distance.

www.dictionary.com

Hello everyone! Today I'd like to tell you about the regional forum hosted by the Canadian Conference of the Arts that MAS Executive Director Brenda Sherring and I attended at the Globe Theatre here in Regina earlier this month. MAS Board Vice President Lyndon Tootosis was also able to attend, which was great!

Once you've read about the forum, I'd also like to encourage you to think about whether you might have something to add to this national discussion. We have a few MAS staff who will be attending the Saskatoon

regional forum on November 27, so if you have input on these issues, now is the perfect time to bring them forward, so MAS staff can present them on your behalf. We will also be mailing a position statement in to the Canadian Conference of the Arts, so we'd love to include your feedback too!

As you may recall from our e-mail to you back in mid-October, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) is hosting a series of regional forums across Canada to help ensure arts and culture remain a focus of the new government in the wake of the federal election, building on the fact that arts and culture became a national election issue for the first time in recent memory.

Federal dollars help to support all of MAS' educational programming, so any potential reductions in those grants could have a big impact on us - and you, our members. We need to work to increase federal funding to MAS and its members, and ensure there aren't any cuts in future. We think this initiative can help us achieve that goal.

That's why we felt it was so important we take this opportunity to work collaboratively with other organizations across Canada to make a national statement - to strongly position arts, culture, and heritage - including Saskatchewan museums - within the public discourse and on the federal political agenda.

In Regina, about 25 people gathered from a variety of cultural viewpoints – MAS joined with representatives of the provincial and federal governments, self-employed artists, representatives from the University of Regina, the MacKenzie Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Swift Current, SaskMusic and more – such a diverse group of people brought together to discuss this issue!

The meeting was led by Alain Pineau, the national director of the CCA, an affable and well-spoken individual who was receptive to our ideas and forthcoming with the CCA's position – and its resource limitations. I am including a link to Mr. Pineau's short blog about the Regina meeting, so you can read what he had to say about the gathering:

<http://ccaforums.blogspot.com/2008/11/regina-forum.html> (Note: If you click on this link and nothing happens, just highlight it and then copy and paste it into your internet address bar – or type it into your address bar, if that’s easier!)

At the meeting, we gathered in small groups to discuss national advocacy priorities. My group felt the key was for Canadians to recognize that culture is broader than just art or just dance or just heritage – it encompasses all of those things and more.

We felt people needed to recognize that they already value and use culture in their lives everyday, through everything from the music they listen to, to the clothes they wear, to the entertainment they take in. Culture **is** already an important part of everyone’s lives, and our group felt a national communications campaign was needed to reinforce that.

Our group was also strong in stating that it was not necessary for people to appreciate all forms of culture in order to appreciate one of them. For example, people who volunteer with museums are valuing and protecting culture; that doesn’t necessarily mean they appreciate million-dollar artwork, or the symphony, or the local garage band, or their regional television station’s programming, for that matter. Our group really felt that people had to be encouraged to continue to support the forms of culture they did appreciate, and recognize those forms were part of a broader fabric which helps to bring the cultural sector, and our country, together.

We want to help ensure that federal funding of culture continues, so people can continue to pursue whichever forms they enjoy, be it museums or the symphony or art galleries or all of those options – or a different option entirely.

For its part, the CCA plans to continue to engage public policy discussion on federal funding for culture, and report on the development of policies and regulations intended to advance and sustain the creation and distribution of all forms of cultural expression in Canada. It also intends to create a dialogue on those policies which will help develop this key sector within Canada’s creative economy.

Do you have input into this discussion that you’d like MAS representatives to share at the Saskatoon forum November 27? Or maybe you’d like to attend. Just get in touch with me and I’ll put you in touch with the right person, whichever you might decide. You can e-mail me at lisa.thomson@saskmuseums.org or call at (306) 780-9451. We need to have your input into the statement MAS is sending to the CCA regarding advocacy for heritage, so please let us know if you have something to share!

I hope you decide to take part in this great effort to bring all of our voices together as one, to protect and enhance our culture and heritage!

Talk to you next week!

- Lisa