



Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment

Final: September 15, 2022



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

expedition
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

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Land Acknowledgement

We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is located in Treaty 8 territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis. The RMWB is a region steeped in culture. People throughout the region enthusiastically participate in culture-related activities, which contributes positively to their quality of life. It is clear that the diverse and unique cultures that are present in the RMWB are an important part of making the region a special place to live.

In recognition of the importance of culture, the RMWB has chosen to undertake a Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment. The purpose of this study is to help ensure future investments in cultural infrastructure best meet the needs of communities in the region. The needs assessment included research and analysis on the current state of cultural infrastructure in the region, community engagement, prioritized facility needs, and considerations related to operations. The needs assessment is intended to be used as input by decision-makers to help guide their decisions related to cultural infrastructure.

Summary of Research and Analysis

A variety of research and analysis activities were conducted to develop this report. The main activities included a fulsome community engagement process, a review of key internal and external documents, demographic analysis, cultural infrastructure inventory, facility utilization analysis, program analysis, comparative benchmarking analysis, and other inputs as described in this document.

What is Cultural Infrastructure?

Cultural infrastructure offers spaces for cultural activities to take place. Some examples of these types of facilities include art studios, dance studios, green space and parks, community halls, libraries, museums, and theatres or performing arts centres. Some examples of cultural infrastructure currently in the RMWB includes the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts, Fort McMurray Heritage Village, MacDonald Island, Centrefire Place, Anzac Recreation Centre, and Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial Museum.

Summary of Engagement Activities

A multi-faceted engagement process was implemented between November 8, 2021 and March 7, 2022. The process engaged members of the public, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, facility staff, RMWB staff, Local Indigenous Advocate, youth, and Council Appointed Committees. We were pleased to provide an open offer for engagement throughout the process. Anyone who wished to speak to the consulting team was provided an opportunity to do so. In total, 364 touchpoints with the community were achieved. The following figure provides a summary of the engagement process.

Summary of Engagement Touchpoints

Engagement Activity	Total Engagement
Resident Survey	240 responses
Cultural Organization Survey	9 responses
Resident Input Workshops (rural and urban)	8 participants
Youth Input Workshops	19 participants
Cultural Organization Input Workshops and Interviews	37 participants
Indigenous Partner Sessions	19 participants
RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committees Sessions	30 participants
Local Indigenous Advocate	2 participants
Total	364 touchpoints

Open Offer for Engagement!

Our engagement goal was to ensure no voice was left unheard. Residents, organizations, and groups who for whatever reason were unable to provide input through the planned activities were encouraged to reach out directly to the Project Team.

Cultural Infrastructure Recommended Priorities

A list of 15 recommended cultural infrastructure priorities for the RMWB was developed based on the findings of the needs assessment. These are provided next. Please see Section 4 for expanded descriptions of each priority and see Appendix F for the evaluation matrix.

- 1. Creative/Maker Spaces
- 2. Indigenous Gathering and Ceremony Spaces
- 3. Outdoor Spaces for Performances, Events, and Festivals
- 4. Multipurpose Spaces
- 5. Cultural Centres
- 6. Community Halls with Kitchens
- 7. Display Space for Visual Art
- 8. Small Scale Performance Spaces
- 9. Dance Studios
- 10. Public Art
- 11. Science Centre
- 12. Museum
- 13. Community Gardens
- 14. Archival Facility
- 15. Parks and Trails

Operational Considerations

Several operational considerations were developed by the consulting team based on the findings from the needs assessment.

- There is a need to increase the affordability of cultural facilities.
- There is demand for more decentralized cultural facilities at the local and community levels.
- There is a need to enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of cultural facilities.
- There is demand for more cultural programming.
- There is a need to improve marketing and promotion of culture-related services, facilities, and programs.
- There is a need for enhanced facility utilization tracking.
- There is a need for further and ongoing engagement with Indigenous Partners.

Next Steps

In order to move forward with cultural infrastructure development, the following next steps are recommended.

1. Seek endorsement of the Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment report from RMWB Council.
2. RMWB Administration and Council to identify which facility development and operational considerations are top priorities for further exploration.
3. Determine if proposed facility developments warrant a feasibility study and/or business case. If so, complete detailed feasibility studies and/or business cases for them.
4. RMWB Administration and Council to prioritize facility developments based on the results of the studies and other capital development priorities.

Conclusion

This document summarizes the cultural infrastructure needs of the community based on what was heard through a fulsome engagement process and extensive research and analysis. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo can now use this information, combined with further inputs such as business cases and feasibility studies, to inform the development of cultural infrastructure in the future.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is an expansive region that is steeped in culture. Residents of the region’s urban centre of Fort McMurray, and the nine rural and Indigenous communities located within the region, enthusiastically participate in culture-related activities. The facilities that they utilize are provided by a mix of organizations, including the RMWB, non-profit associations, school boards, Indigenous communities, and the private sector.

To help ensure investments in cultural infrastructure best meet the needs of communities in the region, the RMWB has undertaken this Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment. The needs assessment includes research and analysis on the current state of cultural infrastructure in the region, community engagement findings, prioritized facility needs, and considerations related to operations. The needs assessment is intended to be used as input by decision-makers to help guide decisions related to cultural infrastructure.

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Process

The Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment process had five, interconnected phases as per the diagram below.



Project Team

The Project Steering Committee was established to oversee the project, provide input, and give feedback on the overall direction of the Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment. The needs assessment was developed by Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Project Steering Committee	
Organization	Representatives
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo	Project Sponsor – Community and Protective Services – Culture & Social Development Branch
Consultant Team (Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.)	Justin Rousseau
	Maxwell Harrison
	Erin Pote
	Breanna Hives
	Lisa Larson



Multicultural Expo
Photo Credit: Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo

Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this report. Primary research was completed through two separate surveys, several community workshops to collect input from residents, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, youth, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo staff, Local Indigenous Advocate, and Council Appointed Committees, an in-person tour of cultural facilities in the urban centre of Fort McMurray, and interviews with groups who utilize cultural infrastructure. Secondary research consisted of a review of key internal and external documents, demographic analysis, comparative benchmarking analysis, and trends analysis.

1

Surveys Administered

- Resident Survey (240 responses)
- Cultural Organization Survey (9 responses)

2

Community Workshops

- Four Resident Input Workshops
- Five Cultural Organization Input Workshops
- Six Indigenous Partner Input Workshops
- Two Youth Input Workshops
- Four RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committee Input Workshops

3

Cultural Organizations Engaged

Invites were sent out by the RMWB to all known cultural-related groups in the region. Forty-two groups chose to participate in the engagement process, including representatives of the following organizations:

Cultural Organizations:

1. Arts Council Wood Buffalo
2. Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo
3. Fort McMurray Ukrainian Cultural Society
4. Fort McMurray Chinese-Canadian Cultural Society

5. Bangladesh Cultural Society
6. Fort McMurray Gujarati Cultural Society
7. Sanatan Mandir Cultural Society
8. Nigerian Community Association of Fort McMurray
9. Rehoboth Alliance
10. East European Cultural Society
11. Alberta Drama Festival Association
12. Swamp Rat Experience
13. Ms. Dianne’s Piano
14. Pawâmiw Creative
15. Pride YMM
16. St. Aidan’s Society
17. Immigrants Advisory Table

Facilities

18. Keyano Theatre & Arts Centre
19. Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts
20. Wood Buffalo Regional Library
21. Westwood Community High School
22. Fort McMurray Public School District
23. Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
24. Royal Canadian Legion
25. Fort McMurray Heritage Village
26. MacDonald Island Park
27. Centrefire Place
28. Syncrude Athletic Park

Indigenous Partners

29. Eight (8) Indigenous Partners/representatives participated.

RMWB Staff, Council Appointed Committees, and Associated Organizations:

30. Regional Recreation Corporation
31. RMWB Staff from various departments
32. Waterfront Advisory Committee
33. Mayor’s Advisory Council on Youth
34. Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality

35. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development and Tourism
36. Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation

Local Indigenous Advocate

37. Jes Croucher

4 Tours Conducted

Consulting team members toured cultural facilities in the urban centre of Fort McMurray on February 23, 2022 to gain a deeper understanding of cultural infrastructure that is currently available. Discussions with operators were particularly useful in terms of identifying challenges and opportunities.

5 Documents Reviewed

- Strategies, plans, and other documents from the RMWB.
- Reports, statistics, surveys, and planning documents from community groups.
- Culture frameworks and policies from provincial and national sources.

For the Love of Live
Photo Credit: Keyano Theatre



2

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

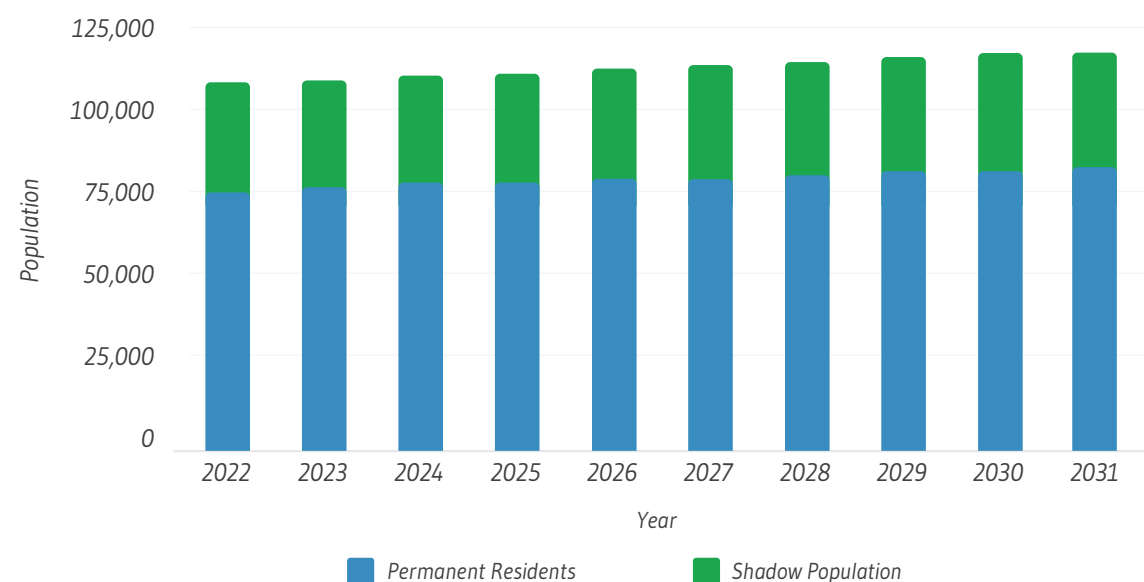
The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is located in northeastern Alberta and covers a vast area of 68,454 square kilometers. It contains one urban service area (Fort McMurray) and nine rural and Indigenous communities, including Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Fitzgerald, Fort McKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier, and Sapræ Creek Estates. The region is also home to over 100 project accommodations. The RMWB is characterized by large swaths of boreal forest and concentrated areas of industrial activity. The area's core industries include mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, and construction.

Demographic Analysis

The total population of the RMWB was 106,059 in 2021.¹ 75,555 (71%) are permanent residents of the region, whereas 30,504 (29%) are classified as the shadow population. The overall population decreased by 15% from 2015, largely owing to the impact of the 2016 Horse River Wildfire and the downturn in the region's economy. As of 2021, 72% of the population lives in the Urban Service Area of Fort McMurray, an increase of 4.3% since 2018.² Assuming a growth rate of 0.97%, the regional population is expected to grow to 116,808 by 2031³

Figure 1. Projected Population Growth*



*The permanent resident population is represented in blue. The shadow population is represented in green. The projected growth rate of 0.97% has been applied equally to both the resident and the shadow populations.

There are more males (52.6%) than females (47.3%) living in the region. One percent of the population is transgender or identifies as a different gender. The population is relatively young when compared with other communities in Alberta. Forty-two-point four percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 44 and the average age is 33.4 compared to the national average of 41.9. However, the proportion of seniors (65 plus) grew from 2.8% of the total population in 2018 to 4.3% in 2021.⁴

The municipality is increasingly ethnically diverse. Of the municipality's permanent residents, 64% self-identified as Caucasian or Euro Canadian in 2018. This is compared to the 75.9% who identified this way in 2012. First Nations and Métis people represent 3.9% and 2.5% of the population, respectively. Other groups include South Asian (6.5%), Southeast Asian (6.4%) and African (4.4%).⁵

The region has high household incomes relative to the rest of the province. In addition, a 2018 study showed that "in almost all spending categories Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo has higher costs (of living) compared to Edmonton and other regions ... with the exception of utilities and recreation and leisure."⁶

Overview of Culture in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The diversity and strength of the regional culture community is well documented in the RMWB Culture Plan and various reports from the Arts Council Wood Buffalo. Community members are active in cultural pursuits across the region and there is a desire to further grow and support it.⁷ Cultural venues host live performances, concerts, plays, comedy shows, festivals, and events that feature local, national, and international talent throughout the year. The region is home to artists from a diversity of disciplines, as well as organizations that offer programs, classes, and workshops for residents of all ages. It is estimated that in 2020, 1,004 people were employed in arts, recreation, entertainment, culture, and information industries.⁸

Organizations that are based in the RMWB and are active in the cultural scene include Arts Council Wood Buffalo, Friends of the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts, Fort McMurray Heritage Society, Wood Buffalo Regional Library, as well as private businesses, school boards, cultural societies, theatre groups, and others involved in dance, theatre, music, visual arts, ceramic arts, and other pursuits. Together these organizations offer many cultural programs and events, most of which are concentrated in Fort McMurray.



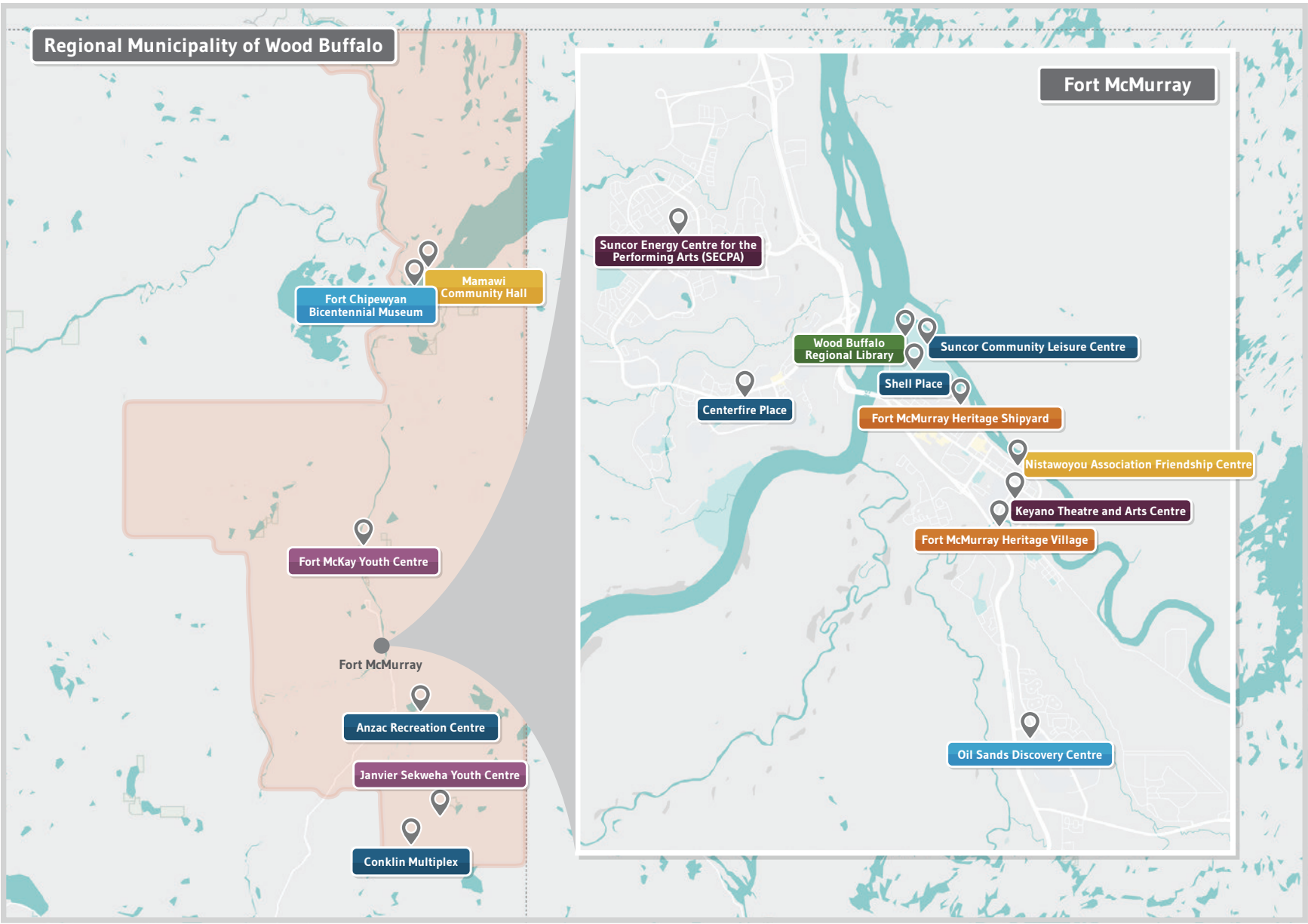
First Nation and Métis organizations and communities are also active in maintaining and expressing their unique cultures. However, there is a need to include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in the local arts community, along with a “strong request for inclusion that is meaningful and respectful”.⁹

The cultural community was significantly impacted by the Horse River Wildfire in 2016, with many people at that time losing access to studio space to practice their crafts. The 2020 flood and COVID-19 pandemic have compounded these impacts.

Cultural Infrastructure Inventory

The RMWB is home to numerous facilities that support cultural activities. COVID-19 has impacted the operations of many of these facilities, with full and partial closures being commonplace since early 2020. See Figure 2 for a map that highlights some of the cultural facilities in the RMWB. A full list of cultural infrastructure is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 2. Map of Cultural Infrastructure of Note in the RMWB



There are no standalone art galleries or culture centres in the region, and all four performing arts theatres are located within educational institutions. The Arts Council Wood Buffalo has also found that there is a lack of studio spaces for the arts in the region, and is working to develop an arts incubator hub to help meet this need.¹⁰

Most planned and existing cultural facilities are located in Fort McMurray, with many concentrated downtown and on MacDonald Island. The nature of this distribution can make them difficult to access for people living outside the urban centre.¹¹ There are several multipurpose community and youth centres in rural communities, such as the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation Community Centre in Anzac, the Conklin Multiplex, and the Fort McKay Youth Centre.

Major facility operators include the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo, Keyano College, and the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board. Numerous non-profit societies and some private businesses also manage culture facilities in the region. First Nations and Métis communities, as well as Indigenous-led non-profits, operate culture-related facilities in the region.

Future Facility Developments, Proposals, and Plans

There are plans for three significant cultural facilities to be built in the RMWB. If and/or when they are completed, these facilities will contribute to the supply of cultural infrastructure and help meet demands for cultural programming and events. Planned and proposed facilities include the following.



Potential Location for the proposed Arts Inc.
Photo Credit: Arts Council Wood Buffalo

Proposed Arts Inc. (Art Council Wood Buffalo)

Arts Inc. was envisioned by the Arts Council Wood Buffalo. This arts incubation facility will be designed to nurture a diverse range of cultural activities for residents. It will include visual arts maker spaces, event space, culinary arts space, a film theatre, and music and studio spaces. It is planned to be located in downtown Fort McMurray, and “will use a ‘hub and spoke model’ to provide services to rural and Indigenous communities.”¹² To date, a feasibility study has been completed for the project and a fund development plan is being prepared.



McMurray Metis Cultural Centre
Photo Credit: McMurray Metis

Métis Cultural Centre (McMurray Métis)

McMurray Métis is developing a cultural centre on MacDonald Island. It is planned to include museum exhibition and collections spaces, workshop spaces, a theatre, music and dance facilities, and outdoor education facilities for cultural activities. The centre will celebrate the Métis way of life, foster greater understanding of Métis culture and history, and facilitate reconciliation with non-Métis peoples and governments.¹³ Construction began in 2021 and is expected to be completed in 2023.

Snye Point Outdoor Event Space (Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo)

The Snye Point Park is a popular public location on Fort McMurray's waterfront where the Snye River and Clearwater River meet. The Park and greenspace is currently used for year-round outdoor festivals and events. The park features two beach volleyball courts, pathways, a play structure, seating areas, and a public boat launch.



Snye Point Festival and Event Space
Photo Credit: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Facility Utilization Analysis

The utilization of cultural facilities and spaces is a consideration when determining current and future needs. The Consulting and Project teams contacted cultural organizations/facilities as well as other facilities with spaces that are used for cultural activities. In many cases, utilization data was not provided, or it did not exist. The following findings were developed based on the data that was provided and what we heard through engagement with facility operators.

Key Findings

- The pandemic has had a significant negative effect on facility utilization. Multiple waves of infections, changing regulations, and participant perceptions of safety have made it difficult for facilities to fully re-open and achieve pre-pandemic utilization.
- There are high levels of utilization for facilities that host dance-related programs.
- There is capacity at theatre facilities for increased utilization. This includes the theatres at the Keyano Theatre and Arts Centre and Centrefire Place.
- Multipurpose and studio spaces at facilities located in Fort McMurray tend to be well utilized on weekends and in the evenings during the week. There is capacity on weekdays.
- Collected data indicates there are low levels of utilization for some private sector spaces that are available for rent (e.g. hotel meeting and conference rooms).

Program Analysis

Culture Programming

RMWB residents participate in a wide variety of cultural programs. Many of these programs have been impacted by the pandemic, with some organizations shifting to offer limited and/or online programming. Though there are cultural programs in rural communities in the region, most of the opportunities are concentrated in the urban centre of Fort McMurray. Instructional programming tends to be focused on children and youth. Demand for instructional programs is on the rise and waitlists are not uncommon for some visual arts and ceramic arts programs.¹⁴

Local businesses and community organizations offer cultural programming in the following areas:

- Dance
- Painting
- Language
- Ceramics
- Music
- Theatre
- Heritage/history
- Crafts
- Indigenous culture
- Film and photography
- Science and technology (oil sands related)

There appears to be limited programming in the areas of literary arts, culinary arts, and digital/electronic arts.

Cultural Events

Communities in the region host many annual cultural events and festivals that welcome residents and attract visitors. These events are hosted in the region's indoor facilities and outdoor spaces. Examples from previous years include:

- Fort McMurray Food Festival
- Fort McKay Treaty Days
- Métis Fest
- Summer Sounds Concert Series
- Fort Chipewyan Winter Carnival
- First Nation, Métis & Inuit Festival
- Dene Days
- WinterPLAY Festival
- June Bug Children's Festival
- New Year's Eve Celebrations
- National Indigenous Peoples Day
- Canada Day Events
- Anzac Winterfest
- igNIGHT – art illuminated exhibition

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis to similar communities was conducted in order to provide a reference point for the region's cultural infrastructure. It should be noted that because the RMWB is so unique in terms of its geography, population, economy, and other factors, it is challenging to make direct comparisons with other communities. Comparator communities were selected if they satisfied the following requirements:

- A. The community serves a similarly sized market.
- B. The community has a similar population to the RMWB.
- C. The community is distanced from other major urban areas.

Grande Prairie (AB), Prince George (BC), Lethbridge (AB), and Thunder Bay (ON) met all three criteria and were selected as comparators. For more information, see Appendix B.

The analysis found that the RMWB has a similar inventory of cultural facilities to its comparators. Key differences include:

- The region exceeds comparative service levels for interpretive heritage facilities, performing arts theatres with a capacity of under 500, and major entertainment venues with the capacity to host events of up to 15,000 people.
- The RMWB is under benchmark standards for public library branches and a professional art gallery.
- Two comparator communities have a dedicated arts centre/hub, and two do not. The RMWB does not have such a facility.

In terms of similarities with comparator regions, the RMWB has:

- The same number (1) of minor event and entertainment venues with a capacity of approximately 4,000.
- The same number (1) of performing arts spaces with a capacity of over 500 people.

Of the comparator regions, Grande Prairie and Lethbridge have arts hubs similar to the hub envisioned by Arts Council Wood Buffalo. The Centre for Creative Arts in Grande Prairie houses visual art and craft programs and events, and includes specialized studios, gallery and gift shop spaces, and spaces for community groups, artists, and events. Casa in Lethbridge houses a variety of dedicated visual and performance art studios, maker spaces, community programming space, and an art gallery. The City of Lethbridge is also actively working with partners to develop an Indigenous Cultural Centre.

Strategic Alignment Analysis

Strategic plans, reports, and documents were reviewed and utilized as an input toward the needs assessment. The following municipal plans are aligned with the provision of cultural infrastructure in the RMWB. For an expanded discussion on these plans, see Appendix C.

- RMWB Strategic Plan
- Big Spirit, Big Ideas, Big Plan: Municipal Development Plan
- Wood Buffalo Culture Plan
- Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan
- Fort McKay Area Structure Plan
- Janvier Area Structure Plan
- Fort Chipewyan Area Structure Plan
- RMWB Parks Master Plan
- Regional Indoor Recreation and Community Facilities Master Plan
- Social Sustainability Plan

The following provincial and national plans support the provision of cultural infrastructure:

- Province of Alberta: Ministry Business Plan Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women 2021-2024
- Canada Council for the Arts Strategic Plan 2021-2026
- Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

Partnership Analysis

Cultural infrastructure in the RMWB and the programs that take place within them are provided by a variety of organizations and sectors. This analysis describes key groups that are involved in cultural service provision and opportunities for potential partnerships.

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions in the region operate several important pieces of cultural infrastructure. For example, the Keyano Theatre and Arts Centre is managed by Keyano College, and the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts is managed by the Fort McMurray Catholic School District. These and other facilities provided by educational institutions significantly contribute to meeting the community's need for cultural space.

Educational institutions have a mandate to meet the cultural needs of their students, and they have access to different resources than municipalities. Therefore, there may be opportunity for the RMWB to partner with educational institutions when developing future cultural infrastructure.

Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations in the region own, operate, and deliver programming at cultural infrastructure in the RMWB. Organizations such as the Arts Council Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray Heritage Society, Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, and many others are important contributors to the delivery of cultural services. There may be opportunity for the RMWB to partner with these organizations in the development of future cultural infrastructure and/or the programming of existing and potential future cultural-related facilities managed by the RMWB.

Indigenous Partners

Indigenous communities, associations, and groups own and operate cultural facilities and deliver cultural-related programming to serve the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the RMWB. Furthermore, cultural infrastructure provided by the RMWB can contribute to meeting the needs of Indigenous People in the region. Therefore, there may be opportunities for the RMWB to collaborate with Indigenous Partners in the provision of cultural infrastructure.

Provincial and Federal Governments

The Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada provide support for cultural infrastructure development through various funding programs. The RMWB may be able to leverage grant funding through available programs to support the capital costs associated with cultural infrastructure development.

Trends Analysis

Trends from the cultural sector were identified and used to inform the needs assessment. Effort was made to ensure the identified trends are relevant to the RMWB. Please see Appendix D for an expanded description of the trends outlined.

Cultural Sector Trends

- Culture is increasingly recognized as an economic driver, and a key element of placemaking and community building. The majority of Albertan adults (87.3%) agree that culture activities in their community make it a better place to live.

- Participation in culture is generally strong. In 2019, 84.7% of adult Albertans either attended or participated in arts activities or events.
- There is growing recognition of the importance of equity. It is increasingly recognized that future programming should be centred on creating an 'equitable arts ecosystem'.
- There is growing interest and participation in cultural activities from Indigenous cultures and traditions. There is also growing demand for Indigenous cultural tourism experiences among domestic and international markets.
- There is a growing trend of developing makerspaces and creative hubs as important cultural amenities.

Infrastructure Trends

- The development of multipurpose facilities is on the rise.
- There is potential for ongoing construction trends to impact facility development (e.g. labour challenges, supply chain issues, inflation, etc.).

COVID-19 Related Trends

- Sharp declines in operational revenues, salaries, and jobs in the culture sector.
- Government relief programs have been made available to support operations, incomes, relaunch of venues, renovation, and construction of new buildings and amenities.
- Ongoing uncertainty about the future of the sector.
- Lower participation coupled with recognition that culture is important to community well-being and recovery.
- Evolving facility design due to public health imperatives.

3

COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
FINDINGS



Celebrating Culture
Photo Credit: Multicultural
Association of Wood Buffalo

The needs assessment considered the needs of community members and groups in the RMWB. Input was gathered from residents, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, youth, RMWB staff, and Council Appointed Committees. An overview of key findings from the engagement process is provided in this section. Please see Appendix E for a detailed What We Heard Report that provides further information.

What We Did

A multi-faceted engagement process was implemented between November 8, 2021 and March 7, 2022. The process engaged members of the public, youth, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, Local Indigenous Advocate, facility staff, RMWB staff, and Council Appointed Committees. We were pleased to provide an open offer for engagement throughout the process. Anyone who wished to speak to the consulting team was provided an opportunity to do so. In total, 364 touchpoints with the community were achieved. Figure 3 provides a summary of the engagement process.

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What We Heard

A significant amount of input was gathered during the engagement process. The consulting team analyzed all the data and identified several key findings and themes from the input opportunities.

Resident Survey

The resident survey was conducted between November 8, 2021 and January 31, 2022. The objective of the resident survey was to gain a deeper understanding of residents’ needs for cultural facilities in the RMWB. The survey was hosted on Participate Wood Buffalo, the RMWB’s engagement platform.

In total, 240 responses were received. Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that they reside in Fort McMurray. Two percent of respondents said they reside in Anzac, 1.5% said they reside in Sapræe Creek Estates, and the remaining 0.5% said they reside in Fort Fitzgerald. Sixty-six percent of respondents identified as being female, 27% identified as male, 1% identified as non-binary/gender non-conforming, and 1% identified as Two-Spirit. The remaining respondents identified as non-binary, two-spirit, or preferred not to say. Respondents were primarily between the ages of 30-39 (37%) and 40-49 (28%).

Key findings included:

- A majority of respondents agreed that cultural facilities in their community are important to their quality of life (81%).
- Respondents were slightly more unsatisfied with cultural facilities in their communities (37%) than satisfied (31%). Twenty-seven percent were neither satisfied or unsatisfied.
- The most requested new or improved performing arts facilities included:
 - Outdoor performance space
 - Small-scale performance space
 - Performing arts centre/theatre
 - Film/video recording space
- The most requested new or improved visual arts facilities included:
 - Crafting/maker space
 - Painting studios
 - Display space for visual art
- The most requested new or improved museum, library, and gallery facilities included:
 - Science centres
 - Galleries
 - Museums

- The most requested new or improved community facilities included:
 - Community gardens
 - Multipurpose space
 - Outdoor festival/event space
 - Cultural centre
- The top barriers to participating in cultural activities more often were:
 - Program(s) not offered
 - Unaware of services/facilities/programs available
 - Lack of facilities
- Forty-six percent of respondents indicated support for increased user fees to better meet cultural infrastructure needs, whereas 38% did not support increased fees. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they would support some level of increase to property taxes to better meet cultural infrastructure needs in their community, whereas 41% did not support increased property taxes.

Cultural Organization Survey

An online survey of cultural organizations in the RMWB was conducted between November 8, 2021 and January 31, 2022. The objective of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of cultural organizations' perspectives in relation to cultural facility needs in the RMWB. The survey was hosted on the Participate Wood Buffalo platform. In total, nine (9) responses were received.

Key findings included:

- Respondents were more dissatisfied than satisfied with cultural facility provision in the RMWB.
- The cost to rent facilities was identified by participants as a significant barrier.
- Respondents would most like to see expanded and enhanced spaces for creative pursuits (e.g. painting, sculpting, photography, woodworking, etc.) and performances (e.g. dance, theatre, music, outdoor performances).
- The majority of respondents project their annual participant base to grow over the next five years.
- The majority of respondents would not be willing to pay increased user fees to utilize enhanced facilities.

Workshops with Residents, Cultural Organizations, RMWB Staff, and Council Appointed Committees

- Participants were asked to consider cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in their community due to facility limitations. Frequently identified limitations included:
 - Art creation and making (e.g. painting, sculpting, photography, woodworking, digital arts, etc.)
 - Cultural cooking
 - Performance activities (e.g. dance and music)
 - Art showcasing
- Participants were asked to share what they see as the top cultural facility needs in their community. The top needs included:
 - Creative/maker spaces with purpose-built rooms, specialized equipment, and proper ventilation
 - Community kitchen facilities
 - Smaller scale performance spaces
 - Outdoor performance space and supporting amenities
 - Flexible and affordable multipurpose spaces
 - Art gallery

Indigenous Partner Sessions

- Participants were asked to consider cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in their community due to facility limitations. Frequently identified limitations included:
 - Indoor ceremonies, gatherings, and events
 - Cultural learning and education spaces (indoor and outdoor) such as sweat lodges
 - Places to practice spirituality, including funerals, wakes and other ceremonies
 - Existing facilities are not accommodating in terms of ventilation for the use of fire and smoke for ceremonies, such as those using pipes and smudging. Likewise, there is a lack of natural firepits
 - Highlighting the importance of the Athabasca River to First Nation and Métis peoples, and the desire for increased access to it
- Participants were asked to share what they see as the top cultural facility needs in their community. The top needs included:
 - Dedicated cultural centres tailored to Indigenous groups that are located in their communities
 - Ceremonial spaces (both indoor and outdoor) located in their communities and in Fort McMurray

- Making existing facilities and spaces more welcoming to Indigenous Peoples
- Utilizing existing RMWB-owned facilities and spaces more efficiently
- Potential for economic benefits associated with cultural spaces and facilities to contribute to community well-being

Additional Key Themes:

The following additional key themes were developed by the consulting team based on input received through the engagement process:

- 1. Rental Costs Are a Barrier** – The cost of renting facilities was frequently identified by participants in the engagement process as a significant barrier to participating in culture more often. Participants felt that lower rental costs would enable them to expand and enhance their program offerings.
- 2. Questioning the Need for Additional Cultural Infrastructure** – Approximately fifteen percent of respondents to the resident survey and several participants in the other engagement opportunities questioned the need for additional cultural infrastructure. These participants shared sentiments such as:
 - Existing facilities should be fully utilized before new facilities are built.
 - The RMWB has enough facilities to meet demand.
 - There are higher priorities in the community (e.g. flood protection, health, roads, etc.).
 - There would be more value in maintaining existing facilities than expanding them or adding new ones.
 - Cultural infrastructure is too expensive to build. It is a nice to have, not a need to have.
- 3. Demand for Decentralized, Community-Level Facilities** – Many participants would like to see decentralized cultural facilities that are available on a neighbourhood level. Examples of facilities these respondents would like to see included community halls, community kitchens, and flexible multipurpose gathering and program space.
- 4. Welcoming and Inclusive Facilities** – Some participants thought that more can be done to make facilities welcoming and inclusive to all cultures, abilities, and orientations. Furthermore, participants felt that the accessibility of the built environment, transportation options, and inclusivity (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms) could all be enhanced to make facilities more welcoming.

Dance at the Arts District
Photo Credit: Arts Council Wood Buffalo



4

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES





This section provides a summary of the top recommended cultural infrastructure priorities that were identified for the RMWB through the needs assessment process. It also includes considerations related to the operation of cultural facilities.

Important Note:

In addition to the information provided in this report, there are several other inputs that the RMWB may want to consider before making decisions to invest in cultural infrastructure. These could include capital and operational costs, revenue potential, governance and operations, and overall cost/benefit. It is recommended that prior to undertaking major capital development projects, the RMWB completes feasibility studies and/or business cases that consider these inputs.

Cultural Infrastructure Priorities

Cultural infrastructure priorities were identified and ranked using a scored evaluation matrix (see Appendix F). The top recommended priorities for cultural infrastructure include the following.

1. Creative/Maker Spaces

The top cultural infrastructure priority identified through the needs assessment was creative/maker spaces. These spaces would be dedicated to creative pursuits, and would contain specialized equipment and purpose-built spaces to accommodate a variety of forms of creation. The creative spaces that were identified through this study for consideration are listed next in order of priority.

- Painting studios
- Photography studios
- Film/video recording space
- Music recording space
- Sculpting studios
- Music studios/rehearsal space
- Woodworking shop
- Glassblowing shop
- Drawing studios
- Metalworking shop
- Printmaking studios
- Fibre arts studios
- Ceramic studios



A growing trend is to co-locate creative/maker spaces into hubs for creation. If new creative/maker spaces are built, and depending on how the components are designed and fit together, there may be opportunity to incorporate several of the spaces identified in the previous list into a single facility.

HOOP Dance Gathering Place

Photo Credit: ArchDaily



2. Indigenous Gathering and Ceremonial Spaces

Welcoming and inclusive spaces for Indigenous People to gather and perform ceremonies. These spaces would include indoor and outdoor facilities that can accommodate the needs of Indigenous Peoples, such as the use of fire and smoke for ceremonies. A gathering space located in Fort McMurray as well as dedicated spaces in rural communities and in Indigenous Partner communities throughout the region was a top priority.

Further engagement is needed with Indigenous Partners to determine the scope/scale and design considerations for these types of spaces.

3. Outdoor Spaces for Performances, Events, and Festivals

Outdoor spaces that can support a wide range of cultural performances, events, and festivals. Important components would include a stage or amphitheatre, areas for the audience and participants to congregate, and support amenities, such as washrooms, utility connections, and parking.



4. Multipurpose Spaces

Flexible and accessible spaces that can be used for a variety of cultural programming and purposes. Particular demand was expressed for more multipurpose spaces in rural communities in the region.

5. Cultural Centres

Buildings dedicated to the preservation and promotion of culture. Cultural centres may feature spaces for gathering and programming, incorporate interpretive elements, and/or house cultural artifacts. These facilities are places for community members and visitors to experience local culture, including languages and traditions.

Indigenous Partners engaged through this process expressed the need for Indigenous cultural centres to be located in their communities. They also highlighted the linkages cultural centres have to cultural tourism and encouraging visitation.



6. Community Halls with Kitchens

Indoor spaces for community members to gather and participate in cultural activities. There was demand for community halls to have kitchen facilities attached to them to support cultural cooking and food preparation for events and programs. The facilities should also be flexible in terms of what they can be used for to encourage multiple uses (e.g. cultural dancing, celebrations, ceremonies, etc.).

Demand was expressed for community halls at the neighbourhood level in Fort McMurray and in rural communities in the RMWB.



7. Display Space for Visual Art

A dedicated space or facility for art to be displayed in a professional setting. The space should have the capacity to display a variety of art forms (i.e. not just paintings or photographs).



8. Small Scale Performance Spaces

Spaces to host small scale performances, such as rehearsals, recitals, presentations, etc. The spaces should have good acoustics, seating for small audiences, and provide audio/visual equipment to support performances.



9. Dance Studios

Studio spaces with sprung floors, mirrors, bars, and other components needed to support local dance programs. Larger spaces with access to audio/visual equipment where dance routines can be rehearsed could be considered, as well.



10. Public Art

Incorporation of more art showcasing local culture in public spaces in the region, including cultural infrastructure.

11. Science Centre

Facility dedicated to sharing the wonders of science in a fun, family-friendly setting.

12. Museum

Facility dedicated to preserving and sharing local history and culture.

13. Community Gardens

Publicly accessible gardens for residents to grow their own food and connect to their community.

14. Archival Facility

Storage facility for archives, records, and materials with appropriate environmental controls to protect and preserve the contents over the long term.

15. Parks and Trails

Outdoor park spaces and trails where cultural activities can take place.

Facility Development Considerations

Opportunity to Leverage Existing Facilities

Throughout the engagement process, participants expressed that existing facilities can be utilized better and more fully to support cultural pursuits. Opportunities to leverage and/or repurpose existing spaces and facilities to meet the community's needs for cultural infrastructure should be explored wherever feasible.

Cultural Facility Development Plans

As described in Section 2, there are plans to develop three significant cultural facilities in the region, including Arts Inc. (feasibility study completed), the Métis Cultural Centre (under construction), and an outdoor event space at Snye Point (concept design stage). Should these facilities be completed, they will contribute to satisfying some of the community's needs for cultural infrastructure.

Operational Considerations

Affordability

The RMWB is encouraged to conduct a review of facilities that are operated by the municipality. Based on the findings of the review, adjustments may need to be made to respond to market conditions and the goals of the RMWB. The RMWB could also consider the opportunity and impacts of implementing a rental fee assistance program to help individuals and groups access cultural infrastructure.

Decentralizing Facility Locations

The RMWB has a strong supply of recreation and culture facilities, and these tend to be centralized into multipurpose facilities that feature a large number of amenities (e.g. MacDonald Island Park, Anzac Recreation Centre). While there are benefits to this approach, the RMWB should consider decentralizing the location of some future facilities to respond to demand from participants in the engagement process for more local and community-level facilities in urban and rural areas of the region.

Inclusion and Accessibility

The RMWB is encouraged to review its current facility use and rental policies to determine if there are opportunities to enhance inclusivity for the cultures, abilities, and orientations in the region. Opportunities to address accessibility concerns that were expressed by some participants in the engagement process should also be explored (e.g. transportation barriers, physical accessibility, affordability, etc.).

Increasing Cultural Programming

Respondents to the resident survey indicated a lack of programs as the top barrier to participating in cultural activities more often. There is opportunity for the RMWB to develop and implement new programs, or support the programming efforts of other groups, to satisfy demand for culture in the region. This could be an attractive opportunity given how inexpensive program development is when compared to facility development.

Improving Marketing and Promotions

Respondents to the resident survey identified a lack of awareness of services, facilities, and programs as a significant barrier to participating in cultural activities more often. To address this barrier, the RMWB is encouraged to review how cultural-related services, facilities, and programs are marketed to the community and consider enhancements that can be made to advertising and promotion strategies.

Tracking Facility Utilization

Facility utilization is an important indicator that should be considered when making investment decisions in cultural infrastructure. Utilization data can be used to understand current demand and project future growth trends. Currently, there is a significant gap in terms of utilization data for cultural facilities in the RMWB. Therefore, it is recommended that the RMWB put in place a robust and consistent facility utilization tracking system.

Further Engagement with Indigenous Partners

Each Indigenous Partner in the region has unique traditions and distinct identities. In addition, the needs of this population continue to evolve. Therefore, the Municipality is encouraged to seek further engagement with Indigenous Partners to develop an enhanced understanding of their cultural infrastructure needs, as well as opportunities to work together to meet the needs of their respective community members.

5

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION



Punjabi Dance Group at World Meets Wood Buffalo
Photo Credit: Laura Beamish, Fort McMurray Today



Next Steps

In order to move forward with cultural infrastructure development, the following next steps are recommended.

1. Seek endorsement of the Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment report from RMWB Council.
2. RMWB Administration and Council to identify which facility development and operational considerations are top priorities for further exploration.
3. Determine if proposed facility developments warrant a feasibility study and/or business case. If so, complete detailed feasibility studies and/or business cases for them.
4. RMWB Administration and Council to prioritize facility developments based on the results of the studies and other capital development priorities.

Conclusion

This document summarizes the cultural infrastructure needs of the community based on what was heard through a fulsome engagement process and extensive research and analysis. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo can now use this information, combined with further inputs such as business cases and feasibility studies, to inform the development of cultural infrastructure in the future.

7

APPENDICES



Appendix A: Cultural Infrastructure Inventory

This section contains an inventory of cultural infrastructure in the RMWB.

Facility Name	Location	Description
Keyano Theatre and Arts Centre	Fort McMurray	Performing arts venue featuring a 510 seat main theatre, 194 seat recital theatre, rehearsal hall, dance and music studios, gallery space, and a costume and prop shop.
Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts (SECPA)	Fort McMurray	Performing arts centre serving students of Holy Trinity Catholic High School and community members. The facility features a 350 seat black box theatre, box office, two dance studios, visual arts/multipurpose room, band room, gymnasiums, and classrooms.
Shell Place	Fort McMurray	Major sports and entertainment venue at MacDonald Island Park. SMS Equipment Stadium has 4,354 seats with capacity to expand seating to 15,000. Conference and ball rooms are available for rent.
Suncor Community Leisure Centre	Fort McMurray	Large multipurpose recreation centre featuring dance studios, visual arts studios, community art gallery, and a variety of recreation/fitness spaces.
Wood Buffalo Regional Library	Fort McMurray	Facility features an extensive book collection, computer lab, program room, meeting rooms, and sections for kids and teens.
Kirschner Family Community Art Gallery	Fort McMurray	Exhibit space at MacDonald Island Park.
Fort McMurray Heritage Village	Fort McMurray	Collection of historic buildings that tell story of Fort McMurray's past. Several buildings on sight are programmed and available for rent (e.g. barn, classroom, outdoor space).
Fort McMurray Heritage Shipyard	Fort McMurray	Site of former shipyard featuring vessels, train cars, artifacts, gift shop, and interpretive centre.
Centrefire Place	Fort McMurray	Features an ice rink, pottery studio, 150 seat theatre, and a multipurpose room.
Syncrude Athletic Park	Fort McMurray	Outdoor athletic park with a 10,000 sq.ft clubhouse that is used to host events.
Fort McMurray Seniors Activity Centre	Fort McMurray	Seniors centre offering a variety of recreational and cultural programs. Main hall seats 100 people.
Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre	Fort McMurray	This facility is currently closed as it is undergoing renovations. The vision is to retain the main hall space and include a full kitchen and meeting rooms.

Eagle Ridge Community Centre (YMCA)	Fort McMurray	Community centre with large multipurpose rooms, boardrooms, and fitness studio.
Westwood Community High School Theatre	Fort McMurray	Proscenium arch theatre with a raised stage and 100 seats.
Doug Barnes Cabin	Fort McMurray	Historic cabin available for rentals. Includes a kitchen and two small event spaces.
Bob Lamb Bandstand	Fort McMurray	Outdoor stage.
Fort McMurray #468 First Nation Community Centre	Anzac	Quonset-style open space for community events including programming, feasts, and birthday parties. Room for 80 people.
Anzac Recreation Centre	Anzac	Multipurpose recreation centre with a boardroom and meeting spaces. Recreation-related amenities include a fitness centre, indoor track, ice arena, fieldhouse, and indoor playground.
Conklin Multiplex	Conklin	Community and recreation facility serving Conklin and Janvier. Features a fitness centre, arena, gymnasium, fitness studio, gathering space, Elders room, and community kitchen.
Mamawi Community Hall	Fort Chipewyan	Community hall that includes a day care.
Charlie Voyageur Conference Centre	Fort Chipewyan	Rentable conference space that seats 150 people.
Uncle Fred's Youth and Elders Lodge	Fort Chipewyan	Cultural facility to promote Denesu líné culture, traditions, ways of living on the land, and art. Features a sunroom and a small boardroom.
Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial Museum	Fort Chipewyan	Museum, library, and archive in a replica of the 1870s Hudson's Bay store building.
Fort McKay Youth Centre	Fort McKay	Gathering place for youth featuring a computer lab, music studio, kitchen, radio station, pottery kiln, office space, and conference room.
Syncrude Giants of Mining Exhibit	Fort McKay	Outdoor exhibit accessible via self-guided tours at Syncrude site.
Oil Sands Discovery Centre	Gregoire	Interprets the region's history, science, and technology related to the oil sands. Features interactive exhibits, two meeting rooms, and a 100 seat theatre.
Janvier Sekweha Youth Centre	Janvier	Gathering place for youth featuring a kitchen, office space, program space, baseball diamond, and outdoor park.

Appendix B: Comparator Service Level Analysis

This section identifies service level provisions for major cultural infrastructure among comparator municipalities. Inventories were developed for each comparator's cultural infrastructure through an online review. It should be noted that while the analysis primarily focuses on municipally owned facilities, some facilities that are not municipally owned, but that contribute to a community's core cultural infrastructure, have been included. This includes facilities such as performing arts centres in educational institutions, arts centres operated by non-profit associations, entertainment venues run by private businesses, etc.

Figure 4 describes the urban, rural, and total populations of comparator jurisdictions.

Figure 4. Population of Comparator Jurisdictions*

	RMWB		Grande Prairie		Thunder Bay		Lethbridge		Prince George
Urban	76,362	Urban	67,627	Urban	108,843	Urban	101,799	Urban	76,708
Rural	29,697	Rural	24,748	Rural	14,415	Rural	11,184	Rural	12,782
Total	106,059	Total	92,375	Total	123,258	Total	112,983	Total	89,490

*Population figures were acquired from 2021 Census data.

Figure 5 describes the findings from the cultural infrastructure service level comparison. Green figures indicate the RMWB is currently exceeding service level provisions, while red figures indicate the RMWB is below benchmark standards. Black figures indicate the RMWB is within an acceptable range of comparator service level provision.

Figure 5. Cultural Infrastructure Service Level Comparison

Cultural Infrastructure	Service Levels					
	RMWB	Comparator Average	Grande Prairie	Thunder Bay	Lethbridge	Prince George
Performance Space (theatre over 500 capacity)	1	1	1	1	1 (planned)	1
Performance Space (theatre under 500 capacity)	4	2.75	3	2	4	2
Arts Centre/Hub	0	0.5	1	0	1	0
Cultural Centre	1 (in construction)	0.25	0	0	1 (planned)	0
Library (# of branches)	1	3	1	4	2	5
Museums	1	1.25	2	1	1	1
Heritage Interpretation Facility	3	1	1	1	1	1
Professional Art Gallery	0	1.25	1	1	1	2
Indoor Concert/Entertainment Venue (over 4,000 capacity)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Outdoor Concert/Entertainment Venue (over 7,000 capacity)	1	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix C: Expanded Strategic Alignment Analysis

The following outlines the alignments between this Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment and municipal, regional, provincial, and national plans. The municipality is currently developing a Transit Master Plan that will identify changes to be made to the regional transit system, which may have implications for and could support access to cultural facilities. The ongoing Heritage Resources Management Plan may also provide additional direction related to cultural facilities.

RMWB Strategic Plan (2018-2021)¹⁵

Outlines several 5-year strategic priorities, initiatives, and related actions for the municipality. Priorities include:

- Responsible Government
- Downtown Revitalization
- Regional Economic Development
- Rural and Indigenous Communities
- Partnerships

Supporting culture, and developing a Culture Plan, are strategies identified under Regional Economic Development.

Big Spirit, Big Ideas, Big Plan: Municipal Development Plan (2011)¹⁶

This plan guides regional, urban, and rural development over a 20-year time horizon, to 2030. It identifies five goals and related directions, including the goal of Vibrant Culture. The following directions are the most relevant to cultural infrastructure.

- Support arts and cultural programs, services, and facilities.
- Promote public events and festivals.
- Enhance collaboration in the arts community.

Other directions with a connection to culture and the provision of cultural amenities include:

- Establish City Centre as a focal point and hub for arts, entertainment, and culture.
- Encourage permanent residency.
- Accommodate growth in Anzac as the secondary service centre and accommodate balanced growth in rural communities.
- Promote commercial and retail development, including arts and entertainment in the commercial sector.
- Pursue tourism opportunities.

Wood Buffalo Culture Plan (2019)¹⁷

The plan establishes a vision for arts and heritage, as well as priorities and strategies to support the vision over a 10-year horizon. The vision is for Wood Buffalo to be “a culturally diverse and socially inclusive municipality in which arts and heritage are vital to its social, economic, and environmental well-being.” The plan’s five priorities are:

- Foster healthy environment for culture: arts and heritage.
- Further develop cultural facilities and resources.
- Support collaboration and innovation.
- Encourage diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility.
- Improve awareness of the value of culture.

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan¹⁸

Will establish a vision for downtown Fort McMurray and will guide development and investment over a 10–15-year horizon. The draft plan identifies a ‘Civic, Arts and Entertainment’ focus area with parks, a plaza, and community events.

Fort McKay Area Structure Plan (2017)¹⁹

Establishes a vision for a community where residents live, work, and play and where cultural heritage is respected and celebrated. One of five plan principles is to “respect and celebrate the Métis cultural heritage.” The plan identifies the desire for a Métis cultural centre and pavilion that would be a facility for community gatherings and celebrations.

Janvier Area Structure Plan (2016)²⁰

Builds on a vision for a flourishing rural community where traditional culture and language is preserved and celebrated. One of five plan principles is to “promote recreational, social and cultural opportunities.” A related policy is to review and investigate opportunities to build and expand community and recreational facilities.

Fort Chipewyan Area Structure Plan (2018)²¹

Builds on a vision for a self-reliant community ‘thriving in commercial fishing and tourism’, with recreation and gathering opportunities, and celebrated traditional culture. Plan objectives include promoting development that supports local tourism and promoting existing public areas and facilities for events.

Parks Master Plan (2019)²²

The plan outlines planning, development, management, and investment direction for parkland in the municipality over a ten-year horizon. Related to culture, the plan directs the development of a Festival and Event Strategy.

Regional Indoor Recreation and Community Facilities Master Plan (2015)²³

The plan guides the development of indoor recreation and community facilities within the RMWB. It includes eight goals, including the following applicable to culture:

- Develop Infrastructure to Enhance Quality of Life for Residents
- Resident Retention and Financial Sustainability
- Maximize Access to Recreational and Community Oriented Opportunities, Programs and Services

One of the plan's recommendations (6.3.1) is 'Provision of culture programming appropriate to each community within the Municipality'.

Social Sustainability Plan (2018)²⁴

This is the municipality's framework for improving social wellness across the region. It defines social sustainability in the RMWB's context. 'Further develop culture and arts' is one of the plan's five Social Sustainability Priorities. Strategies related to this priority include:

- Ensuring that there are broad opportunities for cultural expression and appreciation across the region.
- Creation of gathering places to support expression and celebration of culture.
- Increase the opportunities for culture learning and sharing experiences in the region.
- Engaging youth in identifying and developing non-organized recreation and active living activities and opportunities in culture.

Province of Alberta: Ministry Business Plan Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women²⁵

Identifies outcomes and objectives for the Province for 2021-2024, to guide provincial actions and investments. Outcomes include:

- Creative and cultural industries and civil society are supported through Alberta's recovery plan and red tape reduction.
- All Albertans have the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from vibrant, inclusive and active communities through cultural and recreational opportunities and services that enrich their lives.

Canada Council for the Arts Strategic Plan 2021-2026²⁶

Provides a five-year vision, direction, and commitments for the Council, which is a Federal Crown Corporation that provides funding for the public art sector. One of three directions is to invest in rebuilding and innovation.

Lower Athabasca Regional Plan²⁷

Establishes a plan to protect the environment and support recreational opportunities (2012 through to 2022). Creating recreational opportunities is one of seven regional outcomes identified in the plan.

Appendix D: Expanded Trends Analysis

Cultural Sector Trends

Culture is increasingly recognized as an economic driver, and a key element of placemaking and community building.

Before the pandemic, jobs in the cultural sector were growing.²⁸ In 2018, there were 54,439 culture related jobs in Alberta.²⁹ In addition, the majority of Albertan adults (87.3%) agree that culture activities in their community make it a better place to live.³⁰ In 2016, Wood Buffalo residents ranked “importance of arts and cultural events for ‘quality of life for you and your family’ more highly than other Canadians”.³¹ Many governments (and many levels of government) have stated the importance of creative industries to the economy and have created policies and programs to support the sector as part of larger plans for community development and revitalization.

Participation in culture is generally strong.

Overall, participation in culture activities in Alberta was holding steady before the pandemic. In 2019, 84.7% of adult Albertans either attended or participated in arts activities or events. 50.5% of Albertans attended a community arts festival, fair or cultural performance or event in that year.³² A 2016 survey indicated however that Wood Buffalo residents were somewhat less likely to have attended arts activities than other Canadians in the previous year.³³

Growing recognition of the importance of equity.

While previously acknowledged, the importance and lack of equity in the culture sector has been underscored by the pandemic.³⁴ There is growing recognition that recovery will need to be centred on creating an ‘equitable arts ecosystem’.³⁵

Growing interest and participation in culture activities from Indigenous cultures and traditions.

There is growing interest in Indigenous culture, and growing participation in related activities. A 2016 survey indicated that Wood Buffalo residents are much more likely than other Canadians to have attended an activity based around ‘Aboriginal cultures and traditions’.³⁶ Demand for Indigenous cultural tourism experiences is also climbing, despite pandemic travel restrictions. Half of Albertans are interested in including Indigenous tourism when they travel in-province.³⁷

Between 2014 and 2017 the gross domestic product for Indigenous tourism in Alberta increased by 75% to \$166.2M.³⁸

Growth of makerspaces and creative hubs as important cultural amenities.

Creative hubs are emerging as core cultural facilities in communities around Canada.³⁹ These hubs are multi-tenant facilities that bring together “professionals from a range of arts or heritage sectors and creative disciplines, and that provides multiple users with shared space, equipment and amenities, opportunities for idea exchange and/or professional development, and space and programming that is accessible to the public”.⁴⁰

Infrastructure Trends

Rise in Multipurpose Facilities

The use of multipurpose facilities is on the rise.⁴¹ Consolidation of services can lead to effective use of resources and increased efficiency through economies of scale. Multipurpose facilities become community hubs where a variety of activities including education and recreation can be accessed by families or groups of users.

Potential for ongoing construction trends to impact facility development.

Pandemic-related construction sector trends that are predicted to continue through 2022 include supply chain issues, cost of materials, and labour shortages.^{42,43} These shortages have led to significant increases to the cost of construction and project timelines. They may impact plans and ongoing projects to renovate existing facilities and build new ones.

COVID-19 Related Trends

Sharp declines in operational revenues, salaries, and jobs in the culture sector.

The pandemic has resulted in massive reductions in operational revenues in the arts, culture, and recreation industries.⁴⁴ Estimates made in 2020 suggested that nearly all industries in arts, entertainment, and recreation saw reductions of more than half of pre-pandemic revenue. Factors that contributed to declining revenues, as well as to reductions in jobs and salaries, include cancellation of events, operating restrictions, the in-person nature of the sector, and changing consumer preferences towards distanced, online, and at-home activities.⁴⁵ Municipalities have also experienced loss of user fees for culture facilities.⁴⁶

Government relief programs to support operations and incomes, relaunch of venues/facilities, renovation and construction of new buildings and amenities.

Announcements of new government funding in response to COVID-19 have become common over the last two years. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments have been providing emergency funds and grants to many sectors, including the culture sector. These support programs have been varied and include those intended to support COVID-safe reopening activities and alignment to public health guidelines, as well as those to renovate existing buildings and facilities and to build new ones in support of community well-being. Incomes and operating expenses have also been supported through government programs. Cultural workers, organizations, infrastructure, and facilities are among the many that are targeted by such programs.^{47,48,49,50}

Ongoing uncertainty about the future of the sector.

This uncertainty relates to what consumers will want to return to, if people will return to jobs in the sector, and when it will be possible to operate at pre-pandemic levels.⁵¹ How many people and businesses will remain in the creative sector after restrictions are lifted? What activities will consumers be interested in post-pandemic, and what will their habits and spending be? These questions can only be answered in time as the pandemic and society's response to it evolves.

Lower participation coupled with recognition that culture is important to community well-being and recovery.

Canadians, culture organizations, and governments across the country have recognized the positive impact that culture has on community and economic well-being. The importance of supporting the sector through and beyond the pandemic has been reinforced.⁵² While fewer people may be actively participating in the sector at this time, many are participating as they feel comfortable, and are using culture to explore and communicate during COVID times.^{53,54}

Evolving facility design.

COVID has already changed how cultural facilities are used, and it will likely impact how they are used and designed in the future. Impacts may include changes in facility lay-out to accommodate different on-site staff and user needs, more emphasis on use of outdoor spaces, increased reliance on flexible and adaptive spaces, and reconsideration of expansion and new construction plans.⁵⁵

Appendix E: What We Heard Report



What We Heard Report Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment

June 14, 2022

Filipino Artist Daisy Mella at World Meets Wood Buffalo
Photo Credit: Laura Beamish, Fort McMurray Today



Land Acknowledgement

We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Metis.



McMurray Métis Elder Lorraine Corrigan
Photo Credit: McMurray Métis Sarah Williscraft

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is preparing a Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment (CINA) that will provide a well-supported, data-driven assessment of the need for cultural infrastructure in the RMWB. The CINA will be informed by input from residents, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, RMWB staff, and Council Appointed Committees to ensure it reflects the needs of the community.

Scope of the Report

This report contains the findings from the community engagement activities completed during Phase 2 of the RMWB Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment project. This What We Heard Report will be used in conjunction with other inputs to develop the needs assessment.



For the Love of Live
Photo Credit: Keyano Theatre

What We Did

A multi-faceted engagement process was implemented between November 8, 2021 and March 7, 2022. The process engaged members of the public, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, facility staff, RMWB staff, Local Indigenous Advocate, youth, and Council Appointed Committees. We were pleased to provide an open offer for engagement throughout the process. Anyone who wished to speak to the consulting team was provided an opportunity to do so. In total, 364 touchpoints with the community were achieved. Figure 1 provides a summary of the engagement process.

Open Offer for Engagement!

Our engagement goal was to ensure no voice was left unheard. Residents, organizations, and groups who for whatever reason were unable to provide input through the planned activities were encouraged to reach out directly to the project team.

Figure 1. Summary of Engagement Touchpoints

Engagement Activity	Total Engagement
Resident Survey	240 responses
Cultural Organization Survey	9 responses
Resident Input Workshops (rural and urban)	8 participants
Youth Input Workshops	19 participants
Cultural Organization Input Workshops and Interviews	37 participants
Indigenous Partner Sessions	19 participants
RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committees Sessions	30 participants
Local Indigenous Advocate	2 participants
Total	364 touchpoints

What We Heard

A significant amount of input was gathered during the engagement process. The consulting team analyzed all the data and identified several key findings and themes.



Fort McMurray Heritage Shipyard
Photo Credit: CBC

Resident Survey

- A majority of respondents agreed that cultural facilities in their community are important to their quality of life (81%).
- Respondents were slightly more unsatisfied with cultural facilities in their communities (37%) than satisfied (31%). Twenty-seven percent were neither satisfied or unsatisfied.
- The most requested new or improved performing arts facilities included:
 - › Outdoor performance space
 - › Small-scale performance space
 - › Performing arts centre/theatre
 - › Film/video recording space
- The most requested new or improved visual arts facilities included:
 - › Crafting/maker space
 - › Painting studios
 - › Display space for visual art
- The most requested new or improved museum, library, and gallery facilities included:
 - › Science centres
 - › Galleries
 - › Museums
- The most requested new or improved community facilities included:
 - › Community gardens
 - › Multipurpose space
 - › Outdoor festival/event space
 - › Cultural centre
- The top barriers to participating in cultural activities more often were:
 - › Program(s) not offered
 - › Unaware of services/facilities/programs available
 - › Lack of facilities
- Forty-six percent of respondents indicated support for increased user fees to better meet cultural infrastructure needs, whereas 38% did not support increased fees. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they would support some level of increase to property taxes to better meet cultural infrastructure needs in their community, whereas 41% did not support increased property taxes.

Cultural Organization Survey

- Respondents were more dissatisfied than satisfied with cultural facility provision in the RMWB.
- The cost to rent facilities was identified by participants as a significant barrier.
- Respondents would most like to see expanded and enhanced spaces for creative pursuits (e.g. painting, sculpting, photography, woodworking, etc.) and performances (e.g. dance, theatre, music, outdoor performances).
- The majority of respondents project their annual participant base to grow over the next five years.
- The majority of respondents would not be willing to pay increased user fees to utilize enhanced facilities.

Workshops with Residents, Cultural Organizations, RMWB Staff, and Council Appointed Committees

- Participants were asked to consider cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in their community due to facility limitations. Frequently identified limitations included:
 - › Art creation and making (e.g. painting, sculpting, photography, woodworking, digital arts, etc.)
 - › Cultural cooking
 - › Performance activities (e.g. dance and music)
 - › Art showcasing
- Participants were asked to share what they see as the top cultural facility needs in their community. The top needs included:
 - › Creative/maker spaces with purpose-built rooms, specialized equipment, and proper ventilation
 - › Community kitchen facilities
 - › Smaller scale performance spaces
 - › Outdoor performance space and supporting amenities
 - › Flexible and affordable multipurpose spaces
 - › Art gallery

Indigenous Partner Sessions

- Eight input sessions were conducted with Indigenous Partners and/or their representatives.
- Participants were asked to consider cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in their community due to facility limitations. Frequently identified limitations included:
 - › Indoor ceremonies, gatherings, and events
 - › Cultural learning and education spaces (indoor and outdoor), such as sweat lodges
 - › Accessible places to practice spirituality, including funerals, wakes, and other ceremonies
 - › Existing facilities are not accommodating in terms of ventilation for the use of fire and smoke for ceremonies, such as those using pipes and smudging. Likewise, there is a lack of natural fire pits.
- Participants were asked to share what they see as the top cultural facility needs in their community. The top needs included:
 - › Dedicated cultural centres tailored to Indigenous groups that are located in their communities
 - › Ceremonial spaces (both indoor and outdoor) located in their communities and in Fort McMurray
 - › Making existing facilities and spaces more welcoming to Indigenous Peoples
 - › Utilizing existing RMWB-owned facilities and spaces more efficiently



Midnight Coffeehouse at the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts
Photo Credit: Stacey Northcotte

Additional Key Themes

1

Rental Costs Are a Barrier



The cost of renting facilities was frequently identified by participants in the engagement process as a significant barrier to participating in culture more often. Participants felt that lower rental costs would enable them to expand and enhance their program offerings.

2

Questioning the Need for Additional Cultural Infrastructure

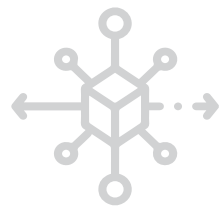


Approximately fifteen percent of respondents to the resident survey and several participants in the other engagement opportunities questioned the need for additional cultural infrastructure. These participants shared sentiments such as:

- a. Existing facilities should be fully utilized before new facilities are built.
- b. The RMWB has enough facilities to meet demand.
- c. There are higher priorities in the community (e.g. flood protection, health, roads, etc.).
- d. There would be more value in maintaining existing facilities than expanding them or adding new ones.
- e. Cultural infrastructure is too expensive to build. It is a nice to have, not a need to have.

3

Demand for Decentralized, Community-Level Facilities



Many participants would like to see decentralized cultural facilities that are available on a neighbourhood level. Examples of facilities these respondents would like to see included community halls, community kitchens, and flexible multipurpose gathering and program space.

4

Welcoming and Inclusive Facilities



Some participants thought that more can be done to make facilities welcoming and inclusive to all cultures, abilities, and orientations. For example, stories were shared of the importance of fire and smoke for Indigenous ceremonies and how existing facilities have not made accommodations for these practices. Furthermore, participants felt that the accessibility of the built environment, transportation options, and inclusivity (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms) could all be enhanced to make facilities more welcoming.



Next Steps

The next steps in the process are to complete the remaining research and analysis activities that will inform the needs assessment and then develop the draft report (currently scheduled for completion in June of 2022).



National Indigenous Peoples Day
Photo Credit: Dr. Brenda Sautner

1

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) is undertaking a Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment (CINA). This assessment will assist the RMWB in determining the need for cultural infrastructure in the region. Engagement with residents, cultural organizations, Indigenous partners, RMWB staff, and Council Appointed Committees will inform the CINA, in addition to other supporting research and analysis.

Scope of the Report

This report contains the findings from the community engagement activities completed during Phase 2 of the RMWB Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment project. This What We Heard Report will be used in conjunction with other inputs to develop the needs assessment.



Mamma Mia!

Photo Credit: Keyano Theatre Company

What is a Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment?

A Cultural Infrastructure Needs Assessment is a study that seeks to understand the current state of cultural facility provision in a community and identify potential enhancements for future decision making. It is intended to inform future planning, resource allocations, and partnership discussions related to cultural infrastructure.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo approved the Wood Buffalo Culture Plan in 2019 as a guiding document to support and enhance cultural initiatives in the region over the next 10 years. The goal of this project is to inform the Plan's vision of Wood Buffalo as a culturally diverse and socially inclusive municipality. To accomplish this, existing spaces must be assessed and input from the community must be collected to identify potential opportunities to enhance cultural spaces in the area.

Input from the engagement process will be used to help identify cultural infrastructure needs in the RMWB. The input collected will be considered in conjunction with other indicators and used to guide future decision making.

What is Cultural Infrastructure?

Cultural infrastructure offers spaces for cultural activities to take place. Some examples of these types of facilities include art studios, dance studios, green space and parks, community halls, libraries, museums, and theatres or performing arts centres. Some examples of cultural infrastructure currently in the RMWB includes the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts, Fort McMurray Heritage Village, MacDonald Island, Centrefire Place, Anzac Recreation Centre, and Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial Museum.

Process

The project has five phases as described below.



Overview of Engagement Activities

A variety of community engagement activities were conducted to develop this report. These activities included two separate surveys (Resident and Cultural Organization), facilitated input sessions with urban and rural residents, cultural organizations, youth, Indigenous Partners, RMWB staff, Local Indigenous Advocate, and Council Appointed Committees, and an in-person tour of cultural facilities in the urban center of Fort McMurray. All community members and stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide their input through an open offer for engagement. The following list is an overview of the engagement activities.

1. Surveys Administered:

- a. Resident Survey (240 responses)
- b. Cultural Organization Survey (9 responses)

2. Community Workshops Conducted:

a. Resident Input Workshops

Dates: Nov. 15th, Nov. 30th, Dec. 6th, Dec. 9th

Purpose: Inform participants of the process and collect input.

b. Cultural Organization Input Workshops

Dates: Nov. 18th, Nov. 25th, Dec. 15th, Dec. 17th, Mar. 7th

Purpose: Inform participants of the process and collect input.

c. Indigenous Partner Input Workshops

Dates: Nov. 8th, Nov. 25th, Nov. 29th, Feb. 15th, Feb. 18th

Purpose: Inform participants of the process and collect input.

d. Youth Input Workshops

Dates: Dec. 17th, Jan. 14th

Purpose: Inform participants of the process and collect input.

e. RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committees Input Workshops

Dates: Jan. 20th, Jan. 24th, Feb. 8th, Feb. 10th

Purpose: Inform participants of the process and collect input.

3. Cultural Infrastructure Tour:

Date: February 23rd, 2022

Purpose: Tour cultural infrastructure and interview facility operators.

4. RMWB Staff from various departments, Council Appointed Committees, and Associated Organizations (through surveys, workshops, interviews, and tour):

- a. Invites were sent out by the RMWB to all known cultural-related groups in the region. 45 groups chose to participate in the engagement process, including representatives of the following organizations:

Cultural Organizations:

1. Arts Council Wood Buffalo
2. Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo
3. Fort McMurray Ukrainian Cultural Society
4. Fort McMurray Chinese-Canadian Cultural Society
5. Bangladesh Cultural Society
6. Fort McMurray Gurjati Cultural Society
7. Sanatan Mandir Cultural Society
8. Nigerian Community Association of Fort McMurray
9. Rehoboth Alliance
10. East European Cultural Society
11. Alberta Drama Festival Association
12. Swamp Rat Experience
13. Ms Dianne's Piano
14. Pawâmiw Creative
15. Pride YMM
16. St. Aidan's Society
17. Immigrants Advisory Table

Facilities:

18. Keyano Theatre & Arts Centre
19. Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts
20. Wood Buffalo Regional Library
21. Westwood Community High School
22. Fort McMurray Public School District
23. Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
24. Royal Canadian Legion
25. Fort McMurray Heritage Village
26. MacDonald Island Park
27. Centrefire Place
28. Syncrude Athletic Park

Indigenous Partners:

29. Eight (8) Indigenous Partners participated.

RMWB Staff, Council Appointed Committees, and Associated Organizations:

30. Regional Recreation Corporation
31. RMWB Staff from various departments
32. Waterfront Advisory Committee
33. Mayor's Advisory Council on Youth
34. Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (multiple departments)
35. Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality
36. Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development and Tourism
37. Wood Buffalo Housing Corp

Local Indigenous Advocate:

38. Jes Croucher



Summer Dance Camp
Photo Credit: MacDonald Island Dance Academy

2

ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

Summary of Engagement Activities

A multi-faceted engagement process was implemented between November 8, 2021 and March 7, 2022. The process engaged members of the public, cultural organizations, Indigenous Partners, facility staff, RMWB staff, Local Indigenous Advocate, youth, and Council Appointed Committees. We were pleased to offer an open offer for engagement throughout the process, whereby anyone who wished to speak to the consulting team was provided an opportunity to do so. In total, 364 touchpoints with the community were achieved. Figure 1 provides a summary of the engagement process.

Figure 1. Summary of Engagement Touchpoints

Engagement Activity	Total Engagement
Resident Survey	240 responses
Cultural Organization Survey	9 responses
Resident Input Workshops (rural and urban)	8 participants
Youth Input Workshops	19 participants
Cultural Organization Input Workshops and Interviews	37 participants
Indigenous Partner Sessions	19 participants
RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committees Sessions	30 participants
Local Indigenous Advocate	2 participants
Total	364 touchpoints

Communication Campaigns

The CINA engagement process was promoted through a variety of means, including the following:

- Participate Wood Buffalo website
- RMWB news releases
- Social media campaigns
- Email invitations to cultural organizations, Council Appointed Committees, and Indigenous Partners
- News article in Fort McMurray Today
- Ads in all rural community newsletters
- Radio advertisements
- MacCalendar.ca event posts
- Spotify ad
- QR codes at In-person Public Engagement Open House
- Return-postage paid mailers for Elders and elderly people in rural and urban areas
- Project introductions at Council Appointed Committee meetings
- Internal RMWB staff communications

The remainder of this section summarizes the key findings from the input received.



Shell Place
Photo Credit: Fort McMurray Today

Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts
Photo Credit: Fort McMurray Real Estate



Resident Survey

The resident survey was conducted between November 8, 2021 and January 31, 2022. The objective of the resident survey was to gain a deeper understanding of residents' needs for culture facilities in the RMWB. The survey was hosted on the Participate Wood Buffalo platform.

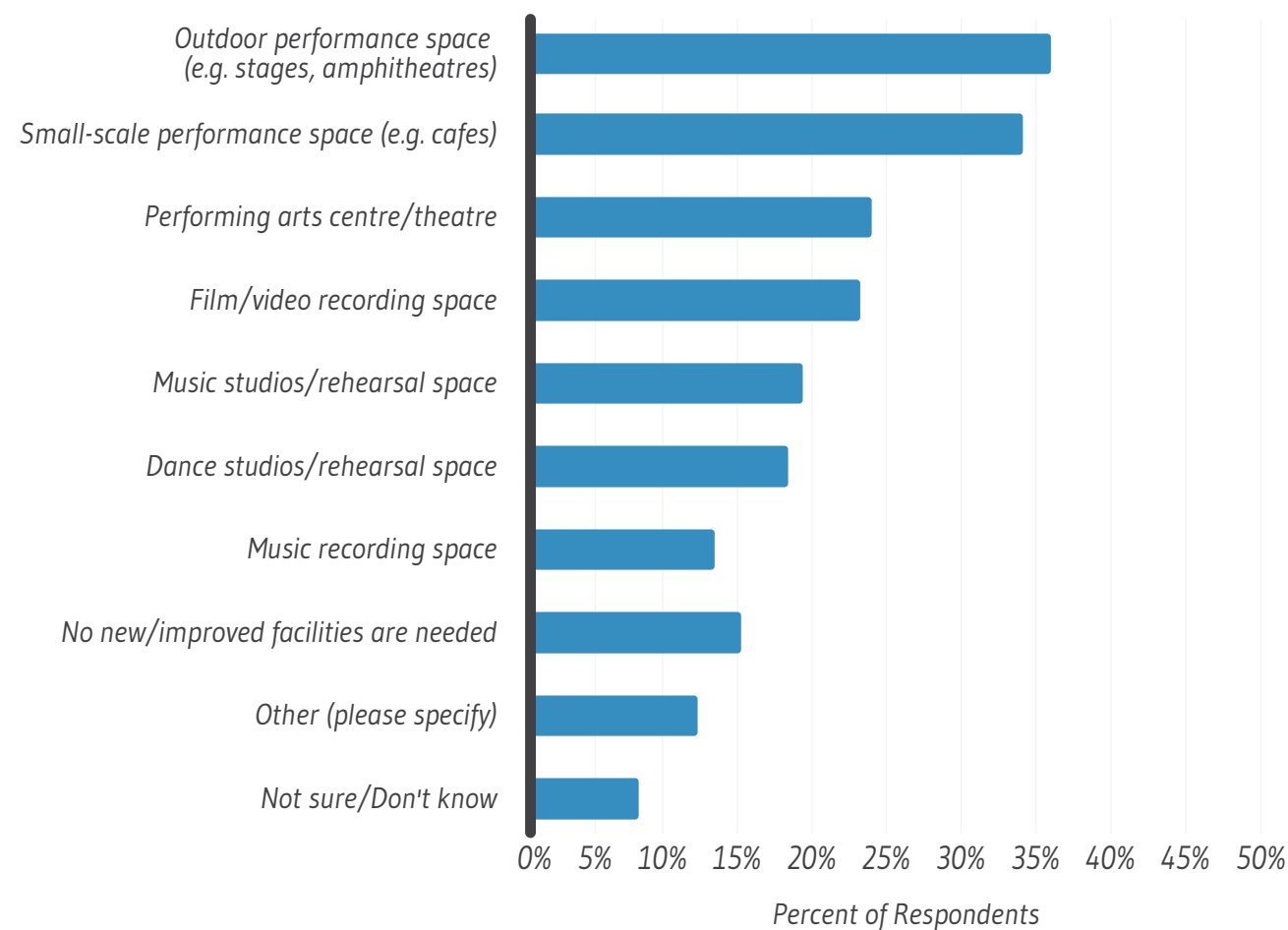
In total, 240 responses were received. Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that they reside in Fort McMurray. Two percent of respondents said they reside in Anzac, 1.5% said they reside in Sapræe Creek Estates, and the remaining 0.5% said they reside in Fort Fitzgerald. Sixty-six percent of respondents identified as being female, 27% identified as male, 1% identified as non-binary/gender non-conforming, and 1% identified as Two-Spirit. The remaining respondents identified as non-binary, two-spirit, or preferred not to say. Respondents were primarily between the ages of 30-39 (37%) and 40-49 (28%).

Cultural Infrastructure Needs

1. In terms of new or improved performing arts facilities, respondents were most in favour of outdoor performance space (36%), small-scale performance space (34%), performing arts centre/theatre (24%), and film/video recording space (24%).*



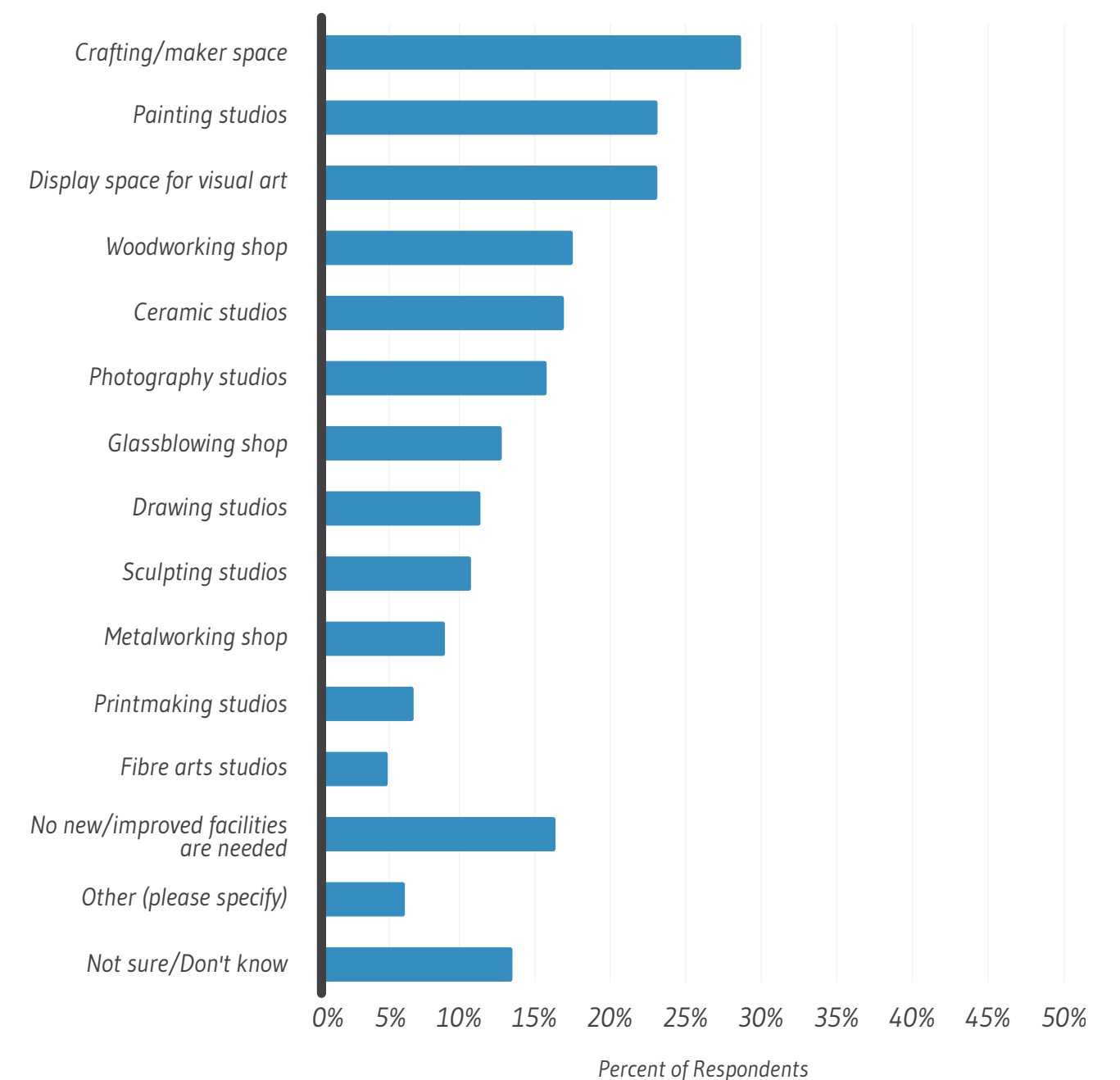
What, if any, new or improved performing arts facilities are most needed in your community? Please select up to three options.



2. In terms of new or improved visual arts facilities, respondents were most in favour of crafting/maker space (29%), painting studios (23%), and display space for visual art (23%).*



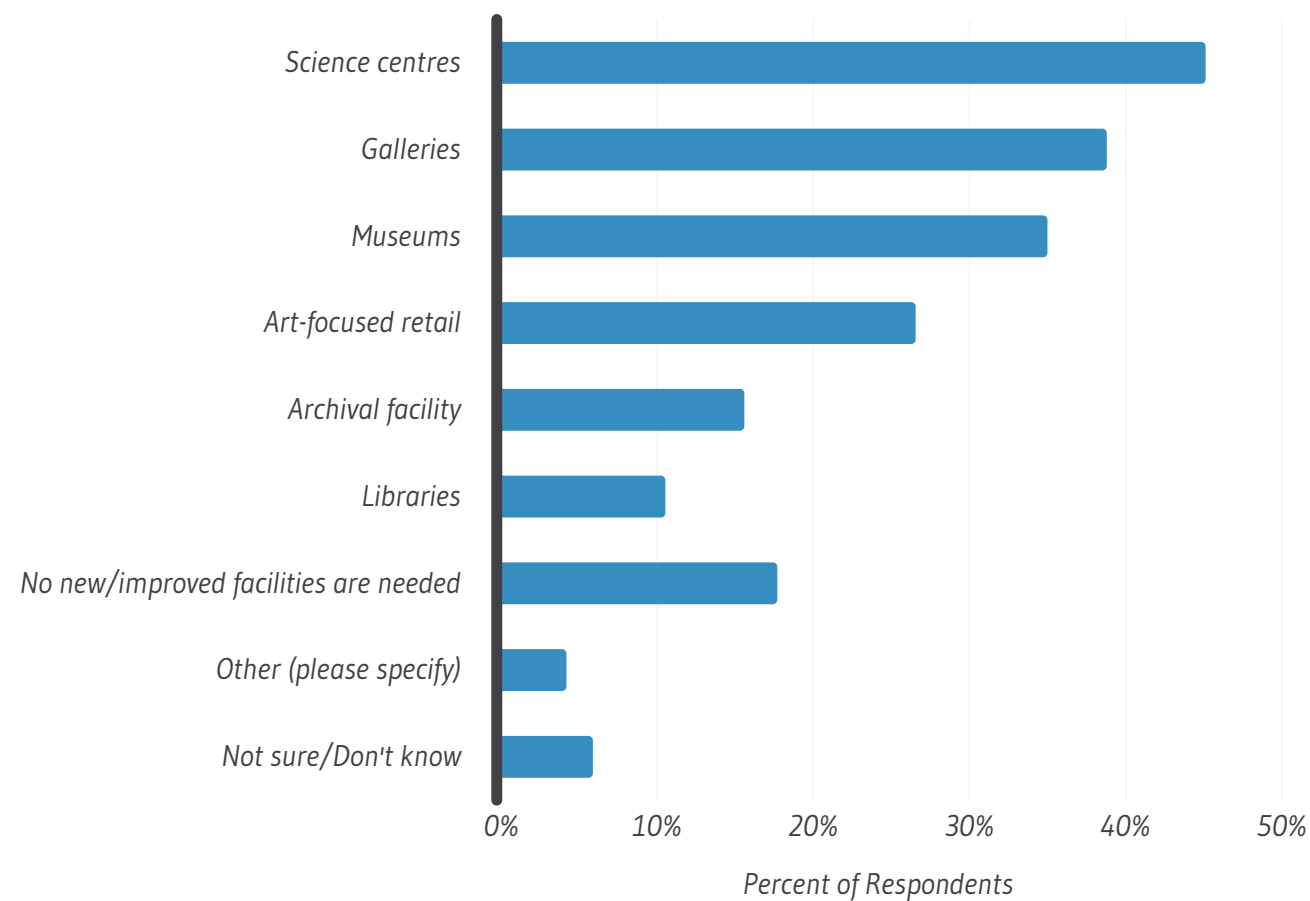
What, if any, new or improved visual arts facilities are most needed in your community? Please select up to three options.



3. In terms of new or improved museum, library, and gallery facilities, respondents were most in favour of science centres (45%), galleries (39%), and museums (35%).*



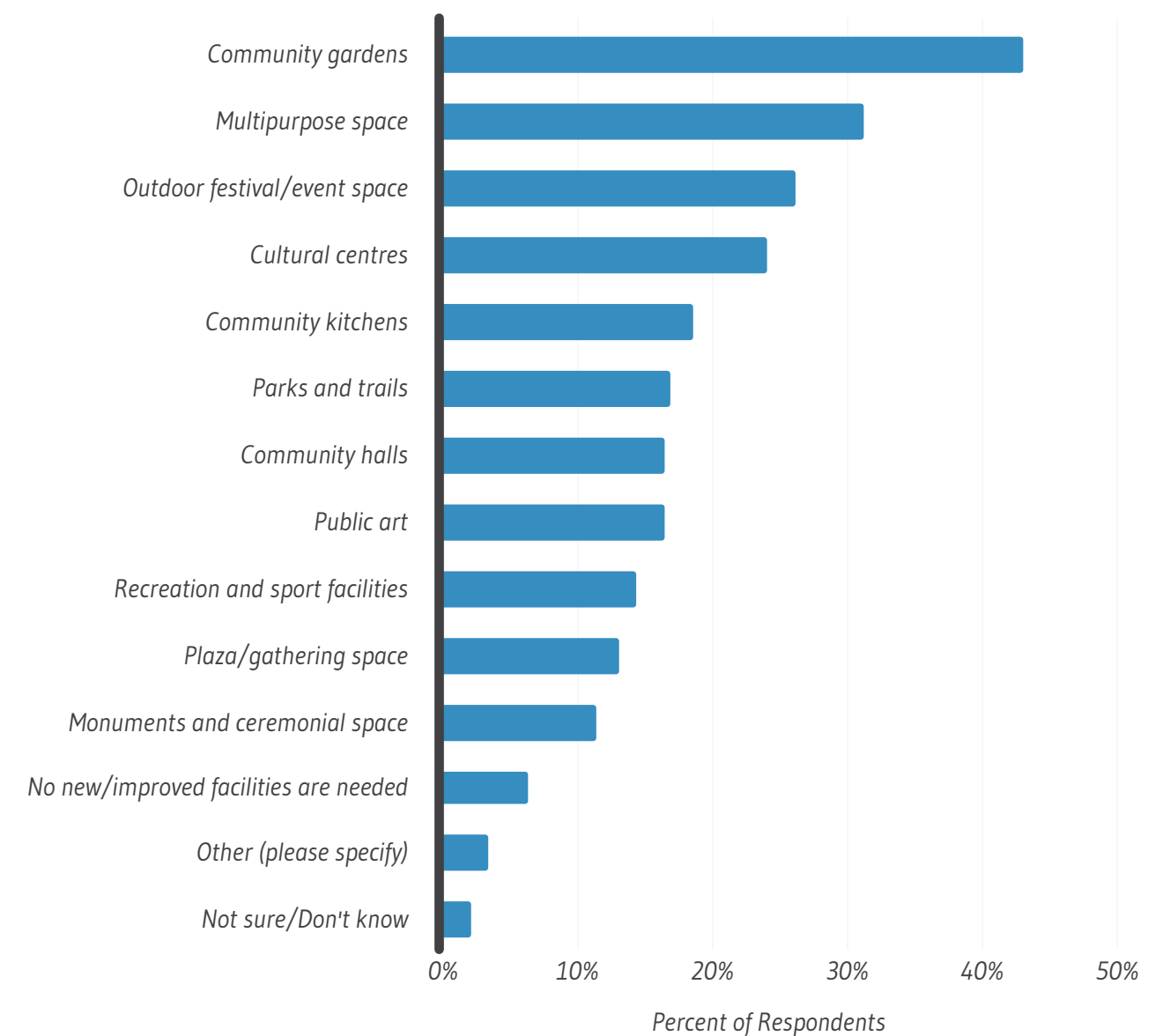
What, if any, new or improved museum, library, and gallery facilities are most needed in your community? Please select up to three options.



4. In terms of new or improved community facilities, respondents were most in favour of community gardens (43%), multipurpose space (31%), outdoor festival/event space (26%), and cultural centres (24%).*



What, if any, new or improved community facilities are most needed in your community? Please select up to three options.



5. Respondents were asked if there are cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in your community due to facility limitations. The most common responses included:

- Artistic, creative, and maker programs
- Small-scale performances and rehearsals
- There are no facility limitations / existing facilities can be better utilized
- Indigenous ceremonies, gatherings, and cultural practices
- The cost of accessing facilities is a barrier
- Cultural cooking classes and events

6. Respondents were asked what their top priority would be if only one improvement could be made to cultural infrastructure in their community. The following were the most frequent responses:

- Purpose-built cultural facilities and amenities
- Utilize existing spaces more fully
- Creative/maker space
- Lower costs to rent and access facilities
- Enhanced accessibility and availability
- Indigenous-focused cultural infrastructure (e.g. indoor and outdoor ceremony spaces)
- Community kitchens and gathering places
- Smaller, multipurpose spaces

*Multiple responses were accepted for these questions, which is why the totals add up to more than 100%.



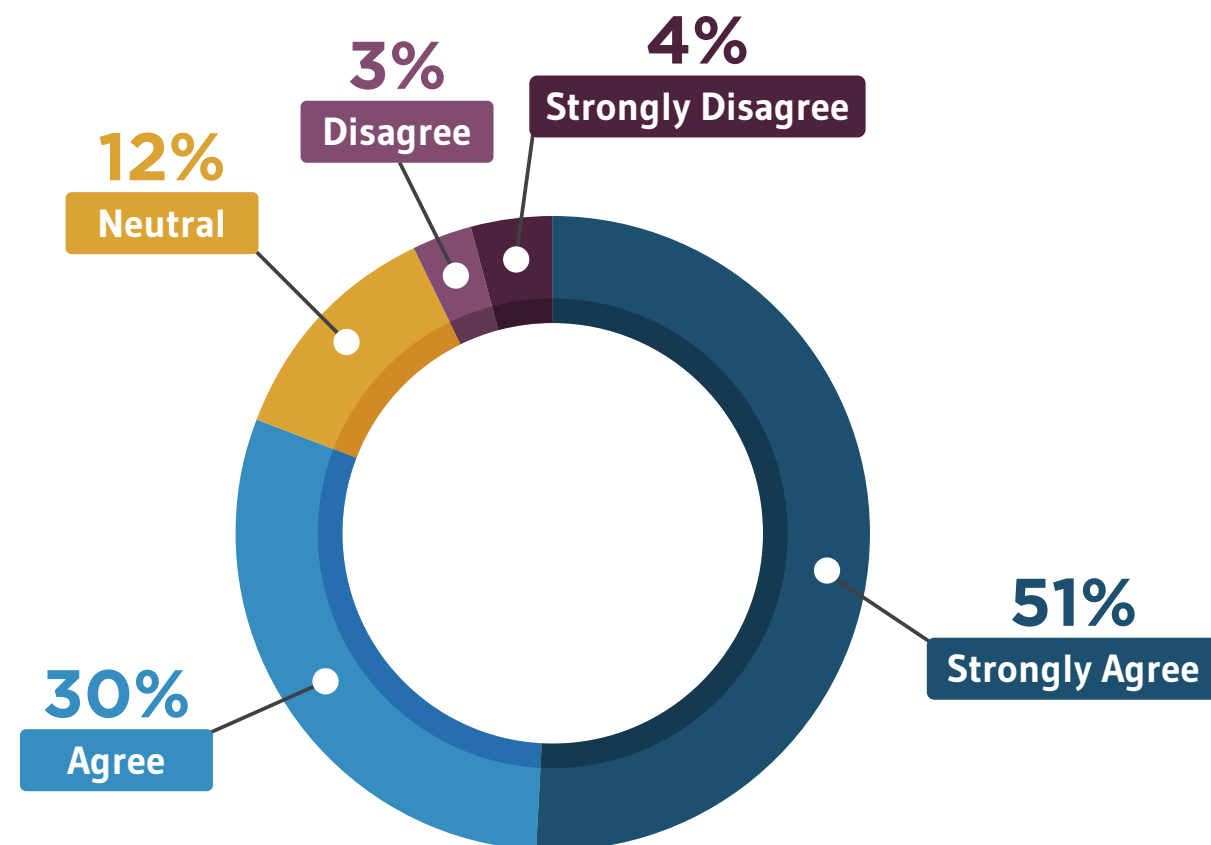
Paint Night
Photo Credit: McMurray Métis

Level of Satisfaction, Barriers, and Support for Cultural Infrastructure

1. A majority of respondents agreed that cultural facilities in their community are important to their quality of life (81%). Twelve percent of respondents were neutral toward the statement and 7% disagreed.



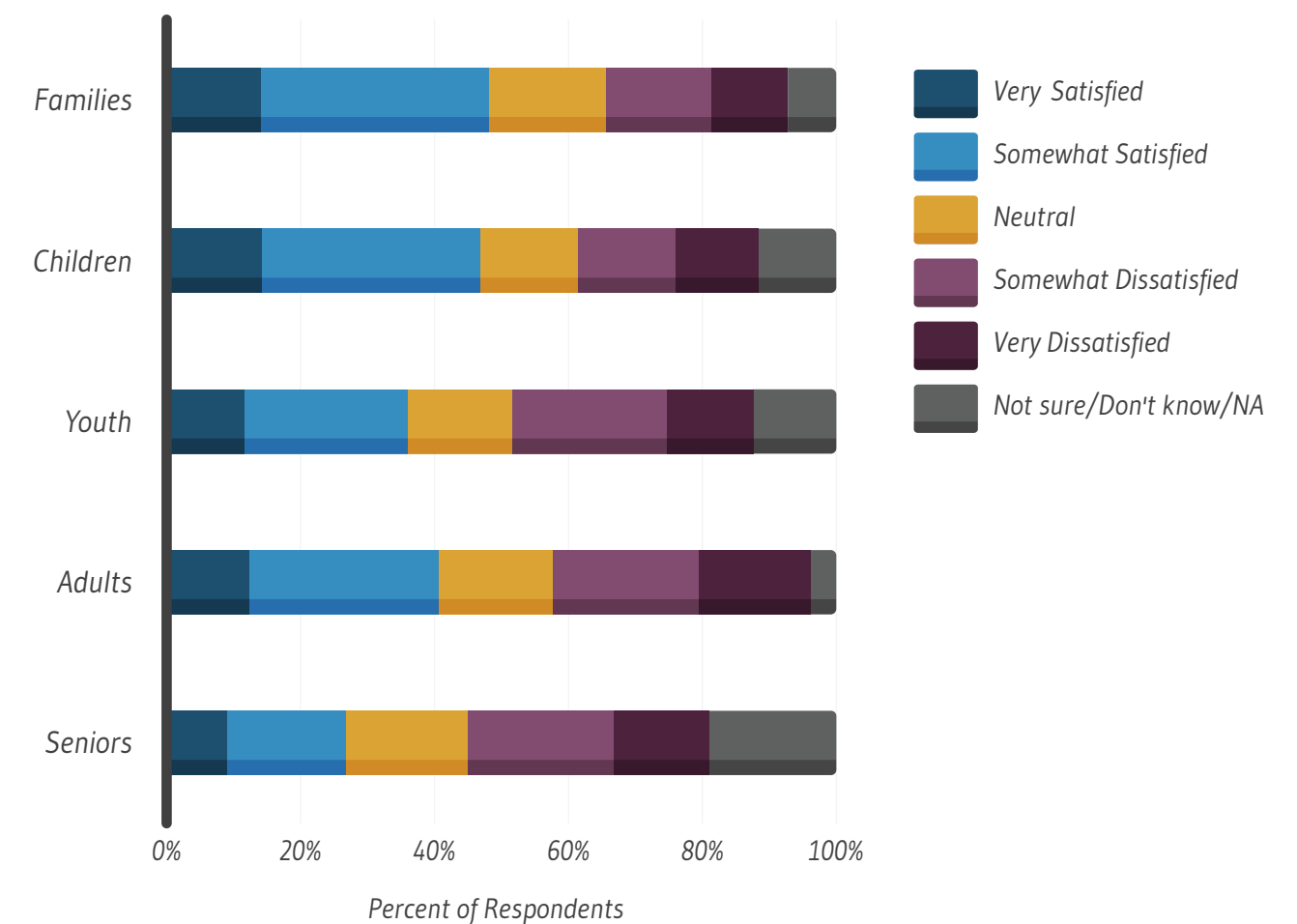
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement:
Cultural facilities in my community are important to my quality of life.



2. Respondents were most satisfied with cultural facilities for families (48%) and children (47%). Respondents were least satisfied with cultural facilities for adults (39%), youth (36%) and seniors (36%).



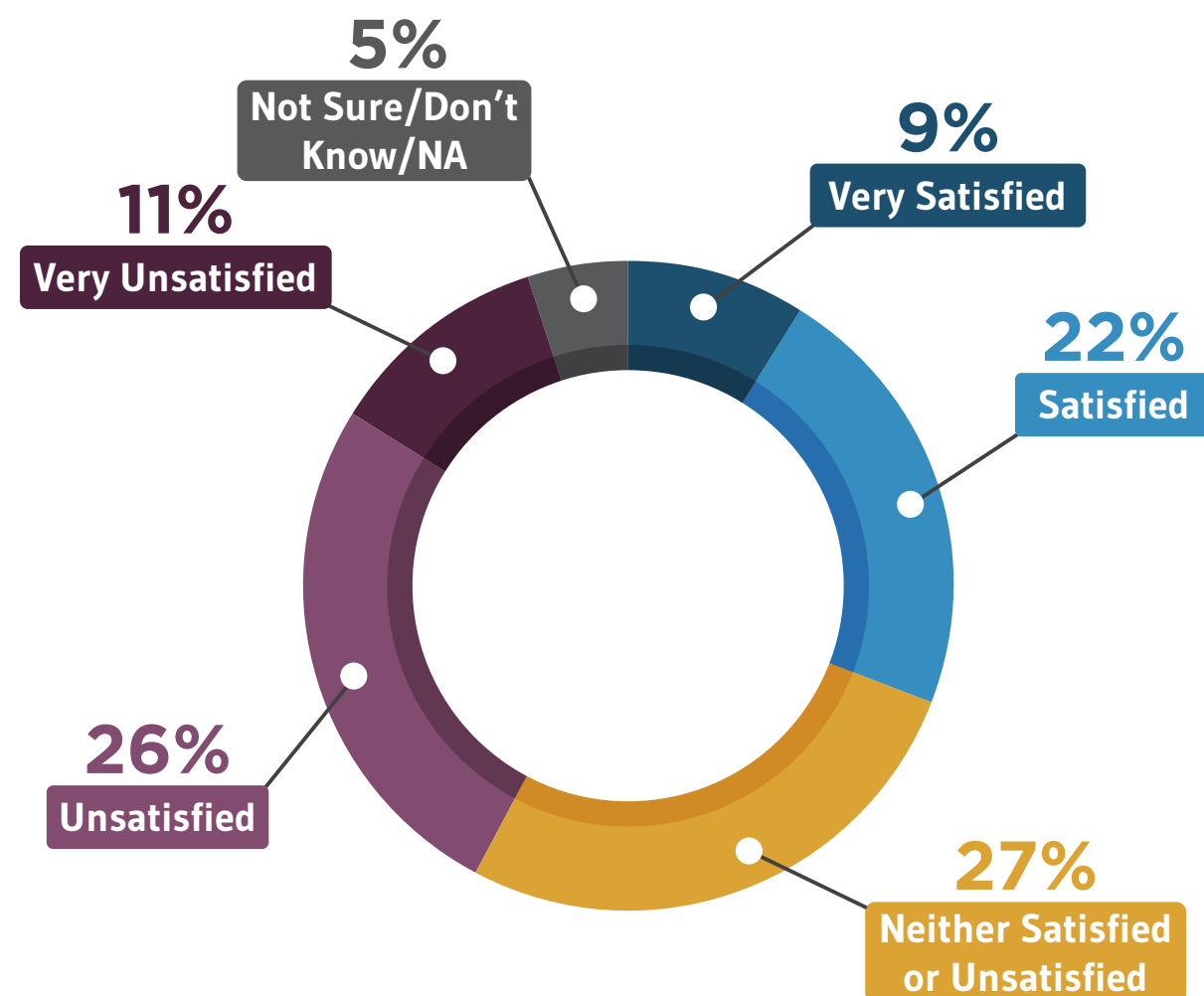
Overall, how satisfied are you with cultural facilities for the following age categories in your community?



3. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with cultural facilities in their community. Twenty-seven percent were neither satisfied or unsatisfied, 26% were unsatisfied, 22% were satisfied, 11% were very unsatisfied, and 9% were very satisfied.



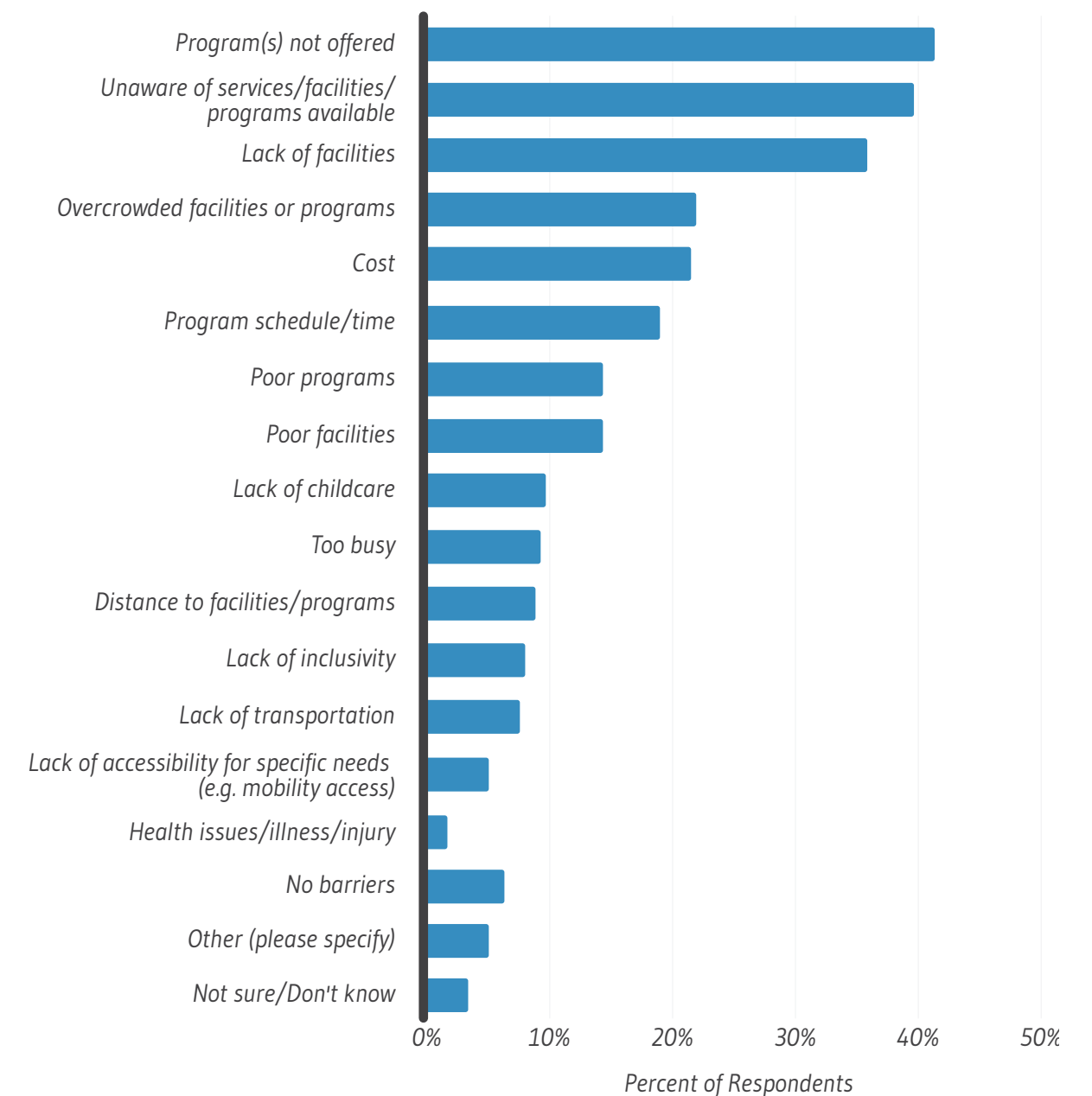
Please rate your overall level of satisfaction with cultural facilities in your community.



4. The top barriers to participating in cultural activities more often were program(s) not offered (41%), unaware of services/facilities/programs available (40%), and lack of facilities (36%).*



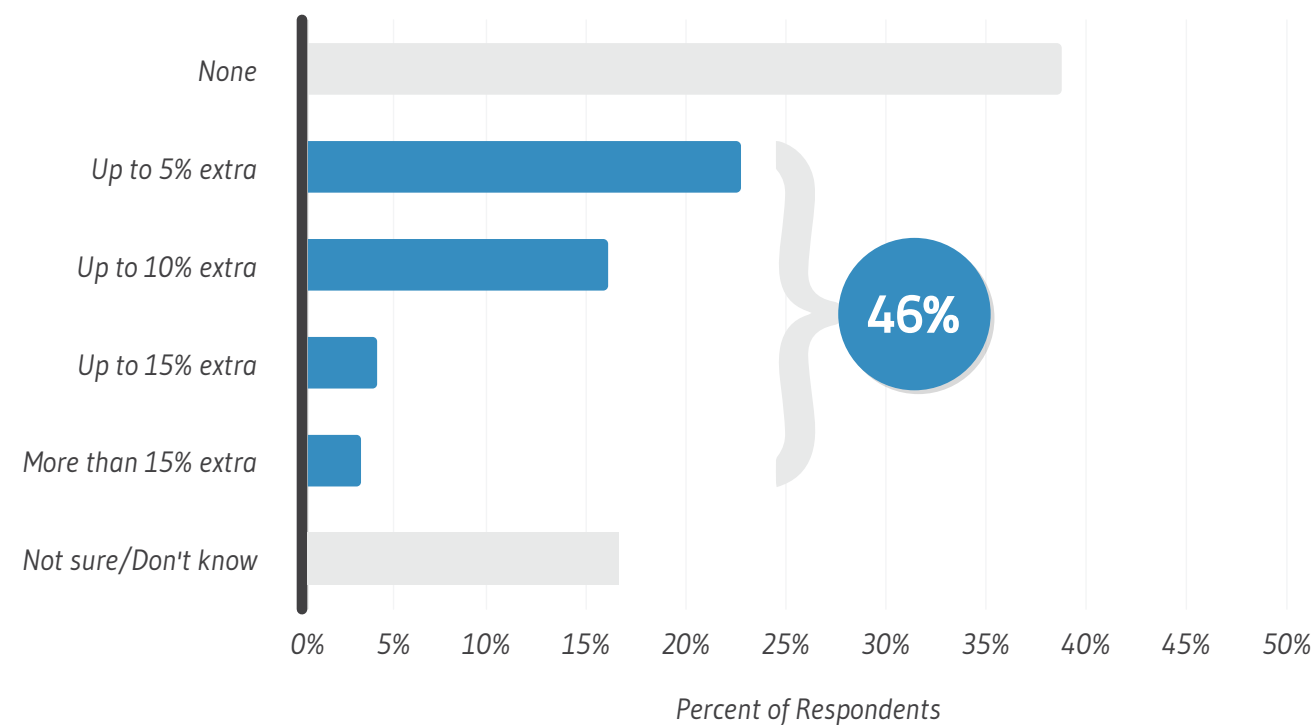
What, if anything, prevents you from participating in cultural activities more often? Please select all that apply.



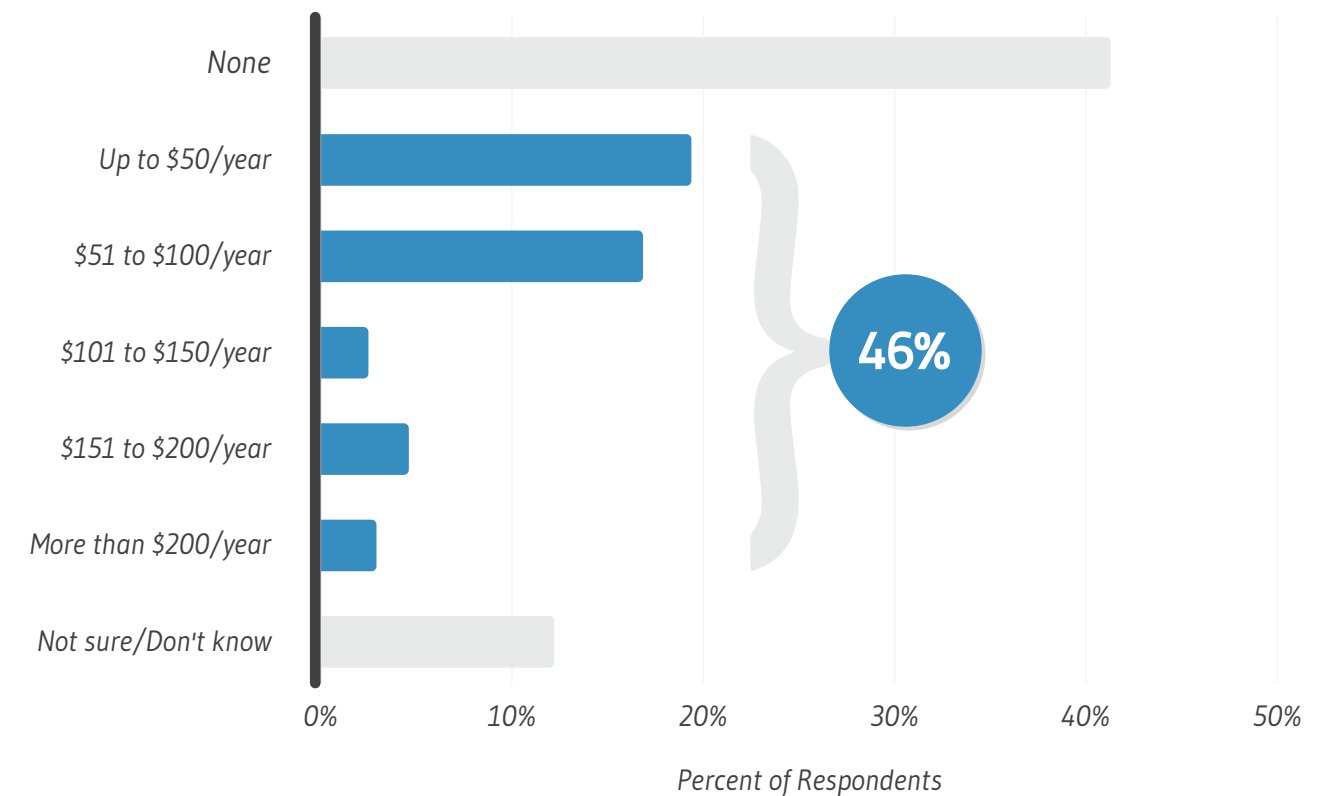
5. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated support for increased user fees to better meet cultural infrastructure needs, whereas 38% did not support increased fees. Forty-six percent of respondents indicated that they would support some level of increase to property taxes to better meet cultural infrastructure needs in their community, whereas 41% did not support increased property taxes.



How much of an increase in user fees would you support to better meet cultural infrastructure needs in your community?



How much of an increase in property taxes would you support to better meet cultural infrastructure needs in your community?



*Multiple responses were accepted for these questions, which is why the totals add up to more than 100%.



Punjabi Dance Group at World Meets Wood Buffalo
Photo Credit: Laura Beamish, Fort McMurray Today



Cultural Organization Survey

An online survey of cultural organizations in the RMWB was conducted between November 8, 2021 and January 31, 2022. The objective of the survey was to gain a deeper understanding of cultural organizations' perspectives in relation to cultural facility needs in the RMWB. The survey was hosted on the Participate Wood Buffalo platform. In total, nine (9) responses were received.

Findings from the Cultural Organization Survey

1. Groups described facility related barriers their organizations experience in meeting the needs of their participants. The quotes below describe some of these barriers further.

"We have used school gyms, but face some barriers there."

"The cost to rent facilities can be prohibitive to our organization."

"Larger spaces tend to be more expensive. As a volunteer run organization, we do not have large budgets and we want to be fiscally responsible while offering excellent programs."

"There are no purpose-built spaces for art making, woodworking, music, sculpture, photography, etc."

"There are no facilities where we can perform outside."

"Funding is the biggest challenge we see."

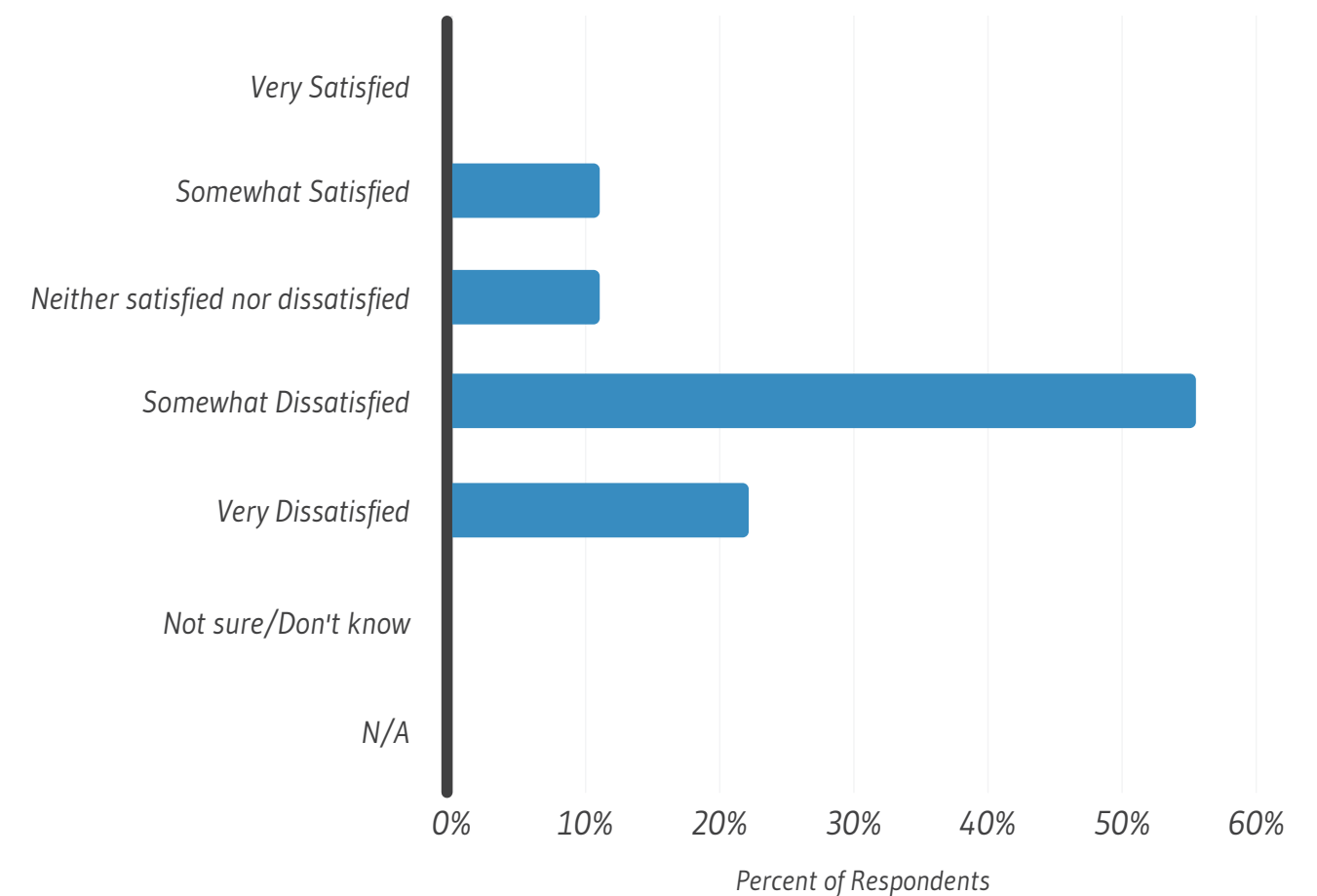
2. Groups also identified new facilities and upgrades to existing facilities that are needed to better serve their organization and their participants. The quotes below describe these further.



3. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with cultural facility provision in the RMWB. Five groups were somewhat dissatisfied, two groups were very dissatisfied, one group was neither satisfied or dissatisfied, and one group was somewhat satisfied.



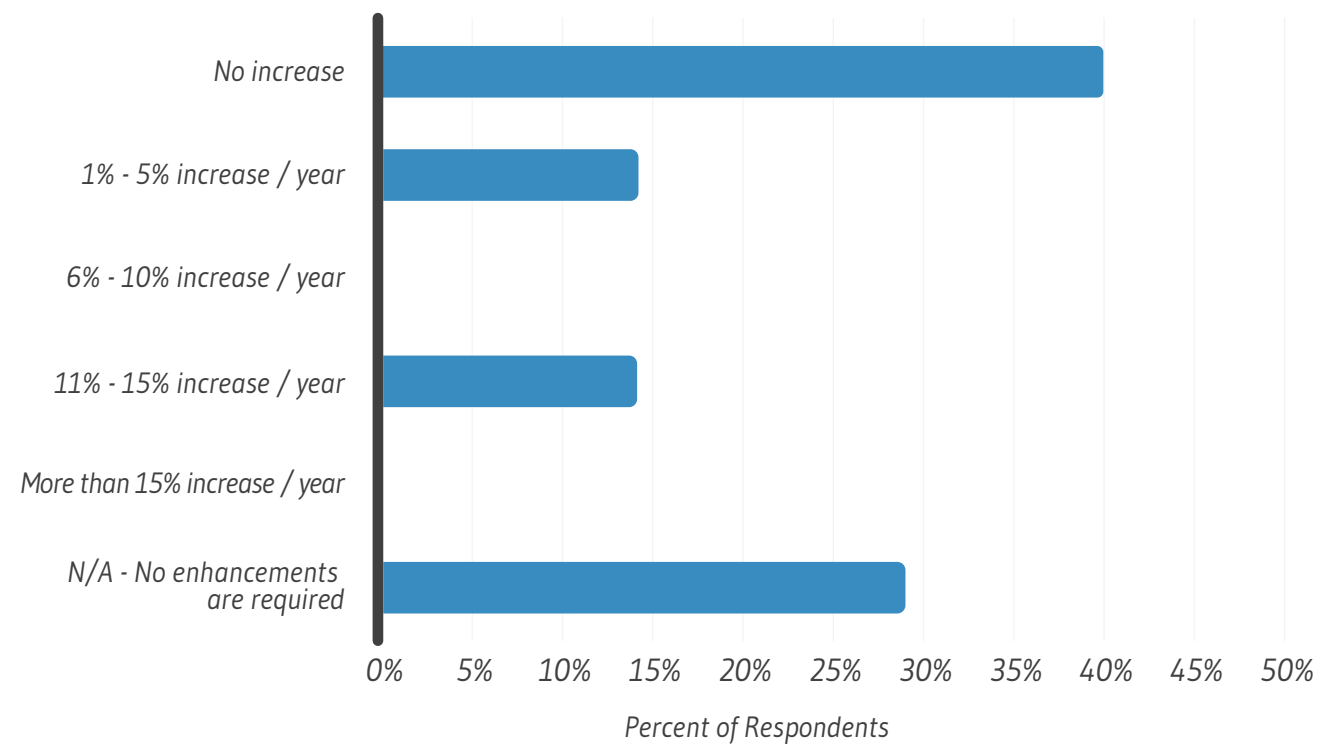
Please rate your level of satisfaction with cultural facility provision in the RMWB.



4. Five groups that responded to the survey are not willing to pay increased user fees for access to enhanced facilities. Two groups were willing to pay increased user fees and two groups felt that no enhancements are required.



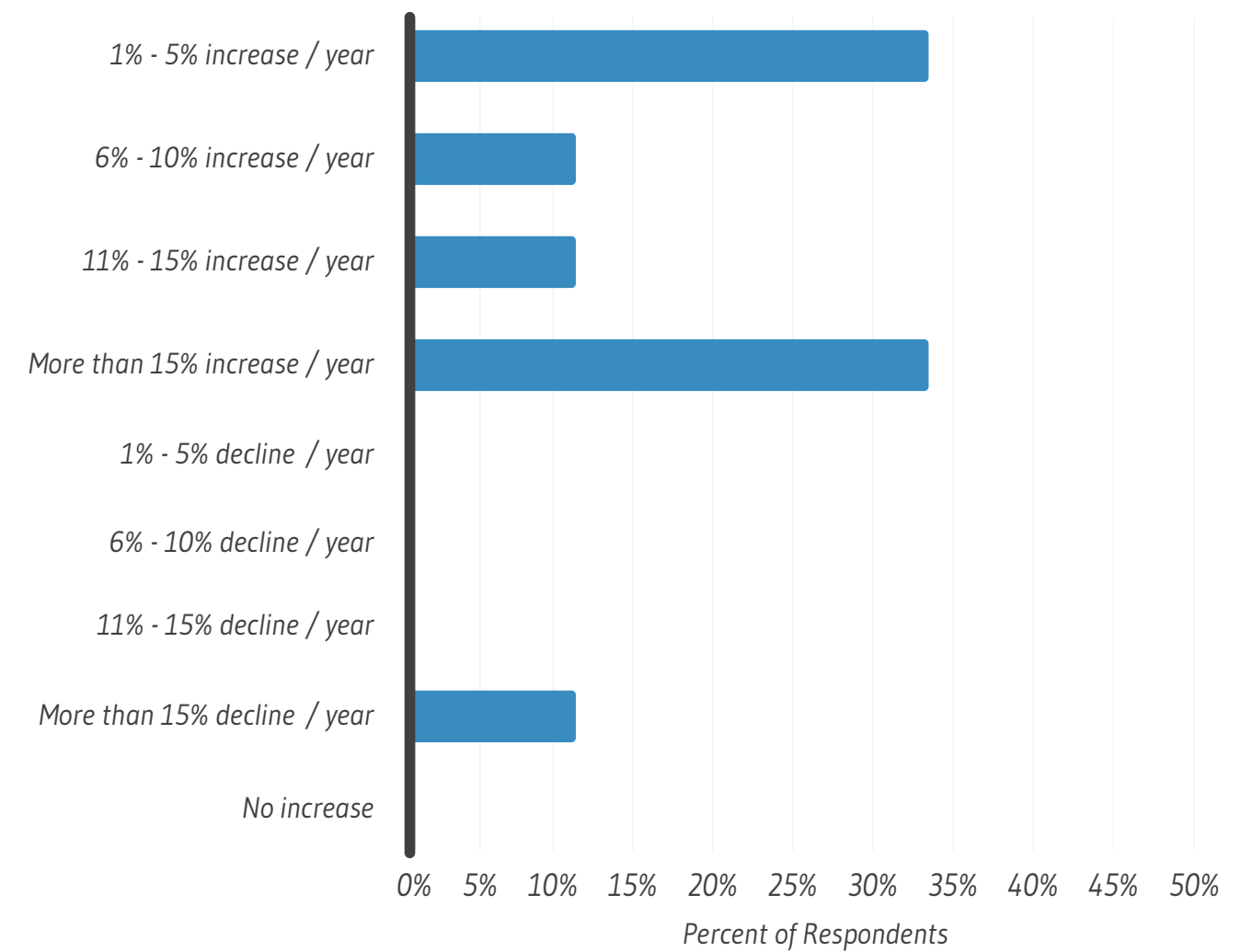
Would your organization be willing to pay increased user fees in order to utilize enhanced facilities?



5. Eight groups project their annual participant base to grow over the next five years. One group anticipates a more than 15% decline in participation.



What are your average annual growth projections for your participant base over the next five years?



Resident Workshops

Four Resident Input Workshops were hosted on November 15th and 30th, and December 6th and 9th. Urban residents of the RMWB were invited to attend the Nov. 15th and Dec. 6th workshops. Rural residents of the RMWB were invited to attend the Nov. 30th and Dec. 9th workshops. In total, eight residents participated in the workshops.



Downtown Fort McMurray
Photo Credit: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo



Urban Resident Workshops

Facility Limitations

Participants were asked to consider cultural programs that are currently limited or cannot be offered in their community due to facility limitations. The following summarizes the input received.

- Cultural dancing
- Language learning
- Theatre
- Music
- Cultural cooking
- Art creation and showcasing

Facility Priorities

Participants were asked to share what they see as the top three (3) cultural facility needs in their community. The following summarizes the input received.

- Commercial kitchen
- Smaller scale performing arts centre
- Large rehearsal space with technology and proper acoustics
- Makerspace/purpose-built space that artists can rent
- Small-scale community stage
- Classrooms for language learning
- Dance studio
- Large space for line/cultural dancing



Art at YMM
Photo Credit: Fort McMurray International Airport



Rural Resident Workshops

Facility Limitations

- There is an overall lack of cultural spaces in communities outside of Fort McMurray.
- Rural artists face challenges in creating and sharing their work because of facility limitations.
- The cost to access some existing spaces is not feasible.
- Need for reasonably priced, accessible facilities where people can go to experience their culture, language, and traditions.

Facility Priorities

- Multiuse cultural space including programming and gathering space that is affordable
- Cultural gift store to sell local artists' wares
- Interactive cultural centre where people can experience Indigenous history through language, artifacts, and storytelling



Youth Workshops

Two input workshops were held with representatives of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Youth (MACOY). The first session was held in December, 2021 and was open to all MACOY members. The second session was held in January, 2022 and was attended by MACOY Arts and Culture Committee members. In total, 19 members participated in the workshops.

Facility Limitations

- Cultural dancing
- Cultural cooking
- Screenings of educational or foreign films
- Music programs
- Workshops (i.e. painting or woodworking)

Facility Priorities

- Large indoor gathering spaces that are affordable
- Multipurpose spaces
- Dance rehearsal space
- Art gallery
- More cultural space uptown in Fort McMurray
- Music rehearsal space
- Utilize existing spaces more fully



Anne of Green Gables
Photo Credit: Keyano Theatre.



Cultural Organization Workshops

Five input workshops were conducted with representatives of cultural organizations in the RMWB. Workshops were held on Nov. 18th, Nov. 25th, Dec. 15th, Dec. 17th 2021, and Mar. 7th, 2022. The majority of attendees represented organizations that were cultural societies, arts and culture-focused groups, cultural facilities, and social service agencies. In total, 36 representatives participated in the workshops.

Facility Limitations

- Performance activities (e.g. music, dance)
- Cultural cooking
- Cultural-related gatherings
- Creative/making activities
- Art showcasing
- Existing facilities are too expensive to rent
- Accessibility and inclusivity could be improved

Facility Priorities

- Community kitchen facilities
- Arts incubator / purpose-built creative space
- Indoor and outdoor gathering spaces for cultural events
- Outdoor festival space with a stage
- Dance/performance studios
- Multipurpose space/classrooms
- Stage
- Art gallery
- Visual arts studio
- Office and meeting space



Indigenous Partner Sessions

Eight input sessions were conducted with Indigenous Partners and/or their representatives. Sessions were held on Nov. 8th, Nov. 25th, Nov. 29th, 2021, Feb. 15th, and Feb. 18th, 2022. In total, 19 representatives participated in the sessions.

Facility Limitations

- Indoor ceremonies, gatherings, and events
- Cultural learning and education spaces (indoor and outdoor)
- Places to practice spirituality
- Existing facilities are not accommodating in terms of ventilation for the use of fire and smoke for ceremonies, such as those using pipes and smudging. There is also a lack of natural firepits.
- Rental costs are a barrier
- Lack of storage
- Supporting Indigenous cultural tourism

Facility Priorities

- Dedicated cultural centres tailored to Indigenous groups that are located in their communities
- Ceremonial spaces (both indoor and outdoor) located in their communities and in Fort McMurray
- Making existing facilities and spaces more welcoming to Indigenous Peoples
- Utilizing existing RMWB-owned facilities and spaces more efficiently



RMWB Staff and Council Appointed Committees Sessions

Five input sessions were facilitated with RMWB staff and Council Appointed Committees. Sessions were held on Jan. 20th, Jan. 24th, Feb. 8th, and Feb. 10th, 2022. In total, 32 participants attended the sessions and were offered the opportunity to provide input.

Facility Limitations

- Creative/maker activities, including digital creation
- Art showcasing
- Not enough dance spaces
- Lack of multipurpose community space at neighbourhood level
- Some rural communities lack facilities
- Accessibility, particularly in rural areas (e.g. affordability, transportation, communication)
- Indigenous cultural gatherings and ceremony (indoor and outdoor)
- Existing facilities are not accommodating in terms of ventilation for the use of fire and smoke for ceremonies, such as those using pipes and smudging. There is also a lack of natural firepits.
- Cultural cooking
- Inclusive preparation spaces (e.g. gender neutral change rooms/washrooms)
- Cost is a barrier

Facility Priorities

- Outdoor event space and support amenities (e.g. power, seating, stage, etc.)
- Professional art gallery
- Creative/maker space
- Being mindful of:
 - › Wants vs. needs
 - › Where facilities are built (e.g. flood plains)
 - › Improving existing facilities before building new facilities
 - › How new facilities will be managed and operated
- Increasing awareness of Indigenous ceremonial needs and how to accommodate these needs at existing facilities

Additional Key Themes

The following additional key themes were developed by the consulting team based on input received through the engagement process. These findings will be used to inform the overall needs assessment.

1

Rental Costs Are a Barrier



The cost of renting facilities was frequently identified by participants in the engagement process as a significant barrier to participating in culture more often. Participants felt that lower rental costs would enable them to expand and enhance their program offerings.

2

Questioning the Need for Additional Cultural Infrastructure

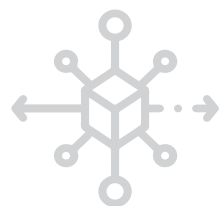


Approximately fifteen percent of respondents to the resident survey and several participants in the other engagement opportunities questioned the need for additional cultural infrastructure. These participants shared sentiments such as:

- Existing facilities should be fully utilized before new facilities are built.
- The RMWB has enough facilities to meet demand.
- There are higher priorities in the community (e.g. flood protection, health, roads, etc.).
- There would be more value in maintaining existing facilities than expanding them or adding new ones.
- Cultural infrastructure is too expensive to build. It is a nice to have, not a need to have.

3

Demand for Decentralized, Community-Level Facilities



Many participants would like to see decentralized cultural facilities that are available on a neighbourhood level. Examples of facilities these respondents would like to see included community halls, community kitchens, and flexible multipurpose gathering and program space.

4

Welcoming and Inclusive Facilities



Some participants thought that more can be done to make facilities welcoming and inclusive to all cultures, abilities, and orientations. For example, stories were shared of the importance of fire and smoke for Indigenous ceremonies and how existing facilities have not made accommodations for these practices. Furthermore, participants felt that the accessibility of the built environment, transportation options, and inclusivity (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms) could all be enhanced to make facilities more welcoming.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, is focused on painting a pink flower on a white canvas. She is using a blue and gold paintbrush. A watercolor palette with various colors is open on the table in front of her. The background is slightly blurred, showing other art supplies. The image is overlaid with a dark blue diagonal banner on the left side, which contains the text '3 NEXT STEPS'.

3

NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

The next steps in the process are to complete the remaining research and analysis activities that will inform the needs assessment and then develop the draft report (currently scheduled for completion in June of 2022).

Thank you for Participating!

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide their input toward the CINA project. The findings from the engagement process will directly contribute to the identification of cultural infrastructure needs.

Stay Informed

Visit rmwb.ca/CINA to sign up for email project updates and learn about future project milestones.



Ballet Performance
Photo Credit: Generation Dance Studio



Canada Day Celebrations
Photo Credit: Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo

Appendix F: Evaluation Matrix

The following evaluation matrix was utilized to identify cultural infrastructure facility priorities in the RMWB.

Evaluation Indicators										
Scoring Chart 0 = does not support / was not identified as a priority 1 = somewhat supports 2 = clearly supports 3 = exceedingly supports	Public Engagement	Cultural Organization Engagement	RMWB Engagement	Indigenous Partner Engagement	Supply	Future Growth Projections	Trends	Strategic Alignment	Public Access	Total Score
1. Creative/Maker Spaces	3	3	3	0	3	2	3	2	2	21
2. Indigenous Gathering and Ceremony Spaces	2	0	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	19
3. Outdoor Spaces for Performances, Events, and Festivals	3	2	3	0	2	1	1	2	2	16
4. Multipurpose Spaces	3	2	2	0	1	1	2	1	2	14
5. Cultural Centres	2	0	0	3	2	2	1	2	2	14
6. Community Halls with Kitchens	2	0	2	0	2	2	1	2	2	13
7. Display Space for Visual Art	2	2	3	0	2	1	1	1	1	13
8. Small Scale Performance Spaces	3	1	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	12
9. Dance Studios	2	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	10
10. Public Art	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	10
11. Science Centre	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	8
12. Museum	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	8
13. Community Gardens	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	8
14. Archival Facility	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	8
15. Parks and Trails	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	7

Methodology Notes:

¹ When ties occurred in the scoring, the facility priority with the higher score on the resident survey was listed first.

Evaluation Indicators

Descriptions of the evaluation indicators are shown next.

Indicators	Description
Public Engagement	Public support for the facility based on the resident survey and input workshops.
Cultural Organization Engagement	Cultural organization support for the facility based on the cultural organization survey, input workshops, facility tours, and interviews.
RMWB Engagement	RMWB staff and Council Appointed Committees support from the input workshops and interviews.
Indigenous Partner Engagement	Indigenous Partner support for the facility based on input workshops.
Supply	The degree to which the facility addresses gaps in the current supply.
Future Growth Projections	The degree to which the facility is supported by growth in projected activity participation by program providers, and general population and demographic growth.
Trends	The degree to which the facility is supported by trends in the culture sector.
Strategic Alignment	The degree to which the facility aligns with applicable strategies and plans.
Public Access	The degree to which the facility is accessible to the public.

Appendix G: References

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