CULTURAL POLICY HUB

Scene-setter | [Cultural Spaces in Practice: Re-thinking Policy & Imagining Future Uses](#)
Prepared by the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD University

> *The Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD University is a national, bilingual platform that builds communities of practice among researchers, policymakers, artists, and creators from across Canada's academic, government, non-profit and private spheres. It will support cultural policy decision-making from the local to the national levels and be a partner in public policy issues to which the cultural sector contributes—and those by which the sector is affected.*
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> *This document provides background on our upcoming Policy Roundtable event*
> ***Cultural Spaces in Practice: Re-thinking Policy & Imagining Future Uses****.*
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> *Details for the event, which takes place virtually*
> *on March 5, 2024 at 1PM (EST) can be [found here](#).*
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> *Interested in learning more about the Hub?*
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Housing availability and affordability of space are among the most pressing policy issues facing all levels of government today, in rural and urban communities across the country. Challenges are mounting around cultural spaces and changing how artists and cultural producers live, work, create and share. At the same time, the public's needs and expectations for "third spaces" outside of work and home have shifted since the COVID-19 pandemic, and feelings of isolation and lack of belonging are on the rise in many cities and communities.[1] While critical to identity and cultural expression in communities, many spaces for cultural exchange—public festivals, community centres or places of significance for ritual or storytelling—fall outside of the definitions of existing cultural policy tools and are thus excluded from the benefits they can provide.

In this context, what policy tools are needed at the local, provincial/territorial and federal levels to support the breadth of cultural spaces and the creators and communities who occupy them? Whose input is considered, how are capital and other resources secured and what are the conditions for successful collaborations between government, developers, the private sector more broadly and the wider community? What new models and solutions can we learn from to hold space for communities and culture, now and in the future?

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[1] https://communityfoundations.ca/initiatives/vital-signs/

(Re)defining Cultural Spaces

"Cultural spaces" are defined in many ways, from a building to a community space for ritual or exchange of cultural knowledge. They can be places of collaboration, joy, belonging, healing and cross-cultural exchange, bringing together people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities. Cultural spaces encompass a broad spectrum of environments where culture is not only created and exhibited (i.e. cultural production spaces) but lived and shared (i.e. cultural consumption or convening spaces).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) takes a broad view of the components of culture in its 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage—essentially, any space where the "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills ... that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." The Convention goes further to define the domains in which these practices exist as:

- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- performing arts;
- social practices, rituals and festive events;
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- traditional craftsmanship.[2]

This broad view of cultural space as a site for these types of cultural exchanges—including intangible and tangible culture—reflects UNESCO's global scope and the importance of "traditional" cultures, including Indigenous peoples and cultures through which transmission of culture is primarily through knowledge-keepers and holders in an oral tradition.

Specific policies that support cultural spaces at different levels of government in Canada typically take a narrower view of the activities that take place there. One such policy, the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage, defines a cultural space as "a physical space where Canadians gather collectively to experience arts or heritage related activities."[3] These cultural activities are further defined as art practices such as music, dance and visual arts.

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[2] https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention
[3] https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund/application-guidelines.html#a25

Cultural Spaces Policy Tools in Canada

Cultural spaces are created and supported by a wide variety of sources and partners: for example, government infrastructure funding at the local, provincial/territorial and federal levels; private developers; foundations; private philanthropy; tourism organizations; municipal tax incentives or initiatives; and direct funding to arts and cultural organizations for their operations and programming. Each has its own objectives, eligibility and reporting requirements.

Many cultural policy tools exist specifically to create and support cultural spaces.

Examples of the policy programs at the federal level include:
- Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (CCSF): an infrastructural/capital funding measure that supports the improvement, renovation and construction of arts and heritage facilities in Canada. It complements the government-wide Infrastructure Canada Programme.
- Building Communities though Arts & Heritage: a funding measure with three streams: two organizational streams for *Local Festivals* and *Community Anniversaries,* and a *Legacy* infrastructure fund to support community-initiated capital projects
- The one-time Cultural Spaces in Indigenous Communities Program supported Indigenous cultural spaces such as long houses, women's lodges, powwow grounds, and other facilities that support cultural ceremonies and teachings.

Examples of the policy programs at the provincial/territorial level are as follows:
- The Province of Quebec's Programme d'aide au développement des infrastructures culturelles, which aims to improve access to and the quality of the province's cultural infrastructure.
- The Province of British Columbia's investment in artists and cultural organizations: several funding agencies and programs including: (a) BC Arts Council, (b) First Peoples Cultural Council, (c) Creative BC, (d) Community Gaming Grants, (e) Heritage Legacy Fund, (f) Tourism Funding Programs and (g) Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grants.

At the municipal level, policy tools and programs to support cultural spaces are often driven by cultural and economic development plans (see our resource list below for examples from across Canada). These plans include recommendations to develop, refine, or expand cultural policy tools, such as:

- zoning bylaws for cultural spaces,
- community amenity contribution policies and density bonusing,
- property tax designation
- creative partnerships for municipally owned and operated spaces,
- cultural asset inventories,

- public art programs and subsidies,
- cultural district designation programs,
- festival support,
- sector-led mapping,
- temporary occupancy permits,
- investment in venues, spaces and cultural industries through arts councils (annual and multi-year operating grants), microgrants, etc.

Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD U Policy Roundtable:

As cultural landscapes evolve, creating and sustaining cultural spaces in the long term requires a multifaceted approach, including utilizing innovative funding models, partnerships and an expanded set of cultural policy tools. On March 5, 2024, the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD University is hosting a roundtable event to explore what this looks like. The panel features examples of different approaches to cultural space in four provinces – BC, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick—from four distinct sets of community needs.

Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan (she/her) brings a wealth of experience from her 30-years career in culture and education, reflecting a deep commitment to cultural inclusivity and community engagement through her work as CEO of Inclusive Voices Incorporated and with the Indigenous Arts Knowledge Exchange and LodgePole Arts Alliance. She is joined by **JP Longboat** (he/him), a Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) and Turtle Clan storyteller, multi-disciplinary artist and Associate Director of Circadia Indigena, to present their work on the Paddling Upstream: Looking Out on the Landscape, With a Plan to Travel report. This project was borne through ArtsBuild Ontario's Indigenous Creative Spaces Project and the close working relationship between Longboat and ArtsBuild's Executive Director, Alex Glass. Through the report, Brennan and Longboat describe the Indigenous-led creative spaces landscape and its evolution in Ontario over the past fifty years. The report envisions a journey by canoe undertaken by the projects' organizers and the communities they engaged, one that readers are invited to accompany them on as respectful observers. The project's facilitators met with nine Indigenous communities through Legacy Stories and Community Gatherings that revealed a common goal: "for Indigenous artists to truly feel respected, relevant and proud of their identity and practice, the whole of the Ontario/Canadian arts ecology needs to accept and embrace Indigenous Self-Determination in the Creative Arts."

The *Paddling Upstream* report's call for Western creatives, funders and policymakers to recognize and embrace self-determination and remove colonial restrictions to how Indigenous creatives live and work can open opportunities for collaboration and "respectful reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous creatives." Their collection of stories of successes and challenges across communities led to teachings and "relearnings"—the persistence of hope, determination, patience and trust among them—that informed the development of four "bundles"

of tools that could contribute to addressing the challenges that Indigenous-led artists and creative communities face on this journey.

Brian McBay (he/him) spearheads an innovative intersection of cultural stewardship, non-market real estate and community development as the co-founder and Executive Director of 221A, an arts organization based on unceded Coast Salish territories (Vancouver). At 221A, Brian works with a team of artists and designers to research and develop social, cultural and ecological infrastructure, while operating a growing portfolio of 140,000 square feet of non-market artist housing, artist studios, and cultural programming spaces. Brian's efforts in establishing a Cultural Land Trust underscore the potential of collaborative governance models in securing community-led and long-term homes for cultural spaces. From 221A's overall operational model to specific artist housing & production spaces such as their Artist Housing Society & Cultural Land Trust, 221A has made significant contributions to research and management of cultural spaces.

Through the Laboratoire d'innovation pour les espaces de création, an initiative implemented in partnership with L'ILOT Coop, Fi3 and Mco Atelier, **Mélanie Courtois** (she/her) and **Julie Favreau** are supporting the Conseil des Arts de Montréal in its efforts "to make access to sustainable and affordable artistic creation space easier in Montréal." The lab's work focuses on exploring the challenges faced by real estate projects for artistic creation spaces and developing solutions to respond to the challenges, with a focus on three main areas: financial support, locations and the development of expertise. **Courtois** serves the project through her role as the founder and presently cultural planning consultant at McoAtelier, while **Favreau** brings her expertise in real estate development, ESG issues, strategic vision and stakeholder relationship building as the founder Fi3 (Favreau Immobilier Investissement Impact).

Julie Whitenect, Executive Director of ArtsLink NB and printmaker based in Saint John, is committed to a sector-led approach to sustaining cultural spaces, emphasizing the role of community engagement and local ecosystems in nurturing the arts and culture sector. Through timely research into New Brunswick Arts, Culture, & Heritage Venues Project, Julie and her partners aim to analyze and articulate the contributions cultural community spaces bring to all New Brunswickers. This project aims to produce results that will inform the province's arts, culture and heritage sector for the next decade, and set precedence as the first thorough source regarding the current challenges and importance of New Brunswick's cultural venues.

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List of References & Selected Policy Resources

- Text of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Canadian Heritage's Canadian Cultural Spaces Fund
- City of Vancouver's Cultural Plan for 2020-2029: Culture | Shift and Making Space for Arts & Culture Cultural Infrastructure Plan
- City of Calgary's Arts & Culture Plan & Budget – 2024-2026
- CSpace Calgary
- City of Edmonton's Festivals and Events Micro Grant Program
- City of Halifax's Sharing Our Stories: Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan
- City of Mississauga's 2019 Culture Master Plan
- City of Toronto's ongoing engagement process for the 2024 Action Plan for Toronto's Cultural Sector
- City of Toronto's Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass Designation
- Arts Habitat Edmonton's 2020 Cultural Infrastructure Plan and City of Edmonton's ArtSpace Map
- ArtsLinkNB and Hill Strategies' New Brunswick Arts, Culture, & Heritage Venues Project
- Critical Digital Methods Institute's Creative Hubs and Networks Mapping Initiative (CHNMI) and the CHNMI Dashboard Dictionary
- Inclusive Voices Inc, Indigenous Creative Spaces Project & ArtsBuild Ontario's Paddling Upstream: Looking Out on the Landscape, With a Plan to Travel Report
- Laboratoire d'innovation pour les espaces de création du Conseil des arts de Montréal
- B.C. Cultural Land Trust
- Creative City Network of Canada (CCN)