



Taking it to the Next Level

Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
Cultural Plan 2016-2020

September 2015



Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1 BACKGROUND REVIEW	4
1.1 RDFFG FUNDED CULTURAL SITES	4
1.2 THE WIDER CULTURAL LANDSCAPE	14
1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE BROADER PLANNING CONTEXT	16
1.4 THE SOCIAL VALUE OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE	18
1.5 REGIONAL CULTURAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	20
2 PREVIOUS CULTURAL PLAN REVIEWS.....	22
2.1 2006 CULTURAL PLAN REVIEW	22
2.2 2010 CULTURAL STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW	23
3 ENGAGEMENT THEMES.....	26
3.1 ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE	26
3.2 THE ENDOWMENT FUND AND CAPITAL FINANCIAL PRESSURES	27
3.3 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS	27
3.4 FIRST NATIONS INTERESTS AND NEEDS	28
3.5 EXPANDED ROLE FOR CULTURAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE CULTURAL COORDINATOR	28
3.6 EXPANDING REGIONAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	29
3.7 ENGAGING LOCAL AND REGIONAL RESIDENTS	29
3.8 THE NEED FOR A REGIONAL STORY	30
3.9 GOLDEN RAVEN MARKETING PROGRAM	30
3.10 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	31
4 EVALUATING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS	32
5 2016-2020 CULTURAL PLAN	40
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A – RELEVANT REGIONAL PLANS	
APPENDIX B – DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	
APPENDIX C – CREATIVE ECONOMY ANALYSIS	
APPENDIX D – DEVELOPMENTS IN TOURISM	
APPENDIX E – FUNDING SOURCES	



Executive Summary

In developing this Cultural Plan, consultation efforts reached out to seek input from a range of organizations working outside the cultural field including Tourism Prince George, Initiatives PG, Prince George Chamber of Commerce, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George Council of Seniors, among others.

All groups expressed support for the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) continuing to invest in heritage and cultural organizations in the region as essential to advancing economic and broader community development in the region. While it was expressed in different ways all recognized a fundamental new economic development model. In the past, communities sought to attract new businesses in the belief that jobs and investment would follow business. In fact research has demonstrated the reverse is true. If we build communities in which people want to live and work, business and investment follow people, not the other way around. These messages must be communicated widely to shift attitudes about the social and economic importance of cultural resources.

RDFFG is demonstrating national leadership in the regional cultural development model it has put in place. Regional cultural development models exist in other provinces but most are centrally administered by local or regional government. RDFFG has established a strategic cultural planning framework rooted in recurring five-year cultural plans. These plans focus primarily on the eight (8) RDFFG funded culture and heritage sites, as well as regional initiatives such as the Golden Raven Marketing Program (GRMP).

This cultural “system” in RDFFG supports the development of individual sites with their distinctive goals and priorities while providing an overarching planning framework that supports collaboration and resource sharing. The result is a strong return-on-investment for the cultural investments by the RDFFG. The collective efforts of the sites deliver more cultural activities and opportunities than would be possible with groups working independently. This collaboration supports the development of tourism packages and itineraries to support and grow tourism development, an increasingly important part of local and regional economic development strategies.

Recognizing the importance of cultural resources to the region, Cultural Plan 2016-2020 builds on previous five (5) year plans developed in 2006 and 2010. A number of recommendations made in these previous plans that have not been fully implemented have been included in the current plan due to their continued relevance. The three plans are also connected through a RDFFG Cultural Vision Statement established in the 2006 Cultural Plan and retained for the subsequent two plans.

The current Cultural Plan review was launched in February 2015 and concludes in September 2015 with a presentation to the RDFFG Board. The planning process included the following:

- An examination of relevant plans or strategies developed by RDFFG or other relevant agencies.
- An on-site visit consultation process that engaged representatives from the eight (8) RDFFG funded sites plus a range of civic and economic development agencies. The site visit also included community focus groups held in McBride, Mackenzie and Valemount.
- The next task was examining the larger social, economic and cultural context for the Cultural Plan.
- The consultants then developed an evaluation framework for assessing and measuring outcomes related to service excellence as well as broader cultural outcomes.
- A review of the wording in current Service Agreements with the eight (8) sites was undertaken and recommendations regarding new language provided.



- This set the context for developing a first draft of the Cultural Plan 2016-2020 which was reviewed by staff at RDFFG and by the Cultural Services Advisory Committee. Revisions to the draft were made and the final document submitted to the RDFFG for presentation to the Board.

A fundamental assumption that underpins the current Cultural Plan is that success in moving forward to implement Actions (in the current and past plans) relies on finding new ways of working together with staff support from RDFFG.

The cultural development system of RDFFG has evolved significantly since it was established, and will continue to change in response to changing needs and opportunities. The regional program provides the base funding needed by organizations to pursue other sources of funding, thereby growing the overall “pie” or base of resources supporting cultural development in the region.

This document represents the Region’s third cultural plan addressing the years 2016-2020. As with previous cultural plans, this one highlights the Region’s progress in implementing recommendations made in previous plans. It also sets out a new set of goals, objectives and actions rooted in the research and community consultation undertaken in developing the Plan.

The following is the framework of Goals and Objectives presented in greater detail later in the report. These should be communicated as widely as possible in the community.

Goal 1: Strengthen Collective Leadership

- Expand the Leadership Role of the Cultural Services Advisory Committee
- Assign a stronger strategic leadership role for the Cultural Coordinator
- Use Service Agreements to support organizational development
- Tailor performance measures to site resources and capacity
- Launch the Endowment Fund

Goal 2: Expand Communications and Marketing

- Expand local and regional awareness
- Leverage social media to expand awareness and increase attendance
- Review the branding and design of the Golden Raven Marketing Program (GRMP)
- Create cultural tourism packages
- Leverage Provincial tourism initiatives to support GRMP in increasing visitation in Fraser-Fort George
- Develop a regional heritage story

Goal 3: Leverage Collaboration and Partnerships

- Convene a First Nations Cultural Roundtable
- Establish a Cultural Portal
- Launch a regional storytelling program
- Launch a regional oral history project
- Implement a collaborative approach to use of the Endowment Fund
- Increase the number of traveling exhibitions
- Convene an Annual Cultural Summit
- Provide expertise needed for sites to host summer camps
- Consider establishing an Attractions Pass



- Implement new festivals ideas
- Organize tours to all sites for summer students

‘Taking it to the Next Level’

This comment was made during a stakeholder interview and is an apt summary of a core theme running through this Cultural Plan. A significant number of individuals interviewed felt that there is an appetite today to consider new strategies and approaches to working together to implement the Cultural Plan.

Cultural Plan Objectives

The following objectives guided the development of *Taking it to the Next Level: Regional District of Fraser Fort-George Cultural Plan 2016-2020*.

- Review the 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan and evaluate its success in delivering cultural services and implementing its recommendations to date
- Highlight the achievements of the eight (8) cultural sites in the context of the previous Plan
- Conduct an environmental scan to identify changes to the funding and cultural environment that will set the context for the new plan
- Conduct secondary source research on cultural planning and funding regionally and provincially
- Conduct interviews with a range of other cultural organizations in the region
- Conduct interviews with a range of community and business stakeholders
- Develop a matrix to demonstrate how cultural places contribute to quality of life in the region
- Review RDFFG cultural site contract language and funding allotments
- Prepare a new five-year strategic cultural plan for the Region

Why is Culture Important?

- **Supports A Thriving Economy** - Culture strengthens the economy by revitalizing downtowns, attracting tourists and businesses and creating jobs.
 - **Enhances Our Quality Of Life** - Culture gives meaning and context to people’s lives. It engages our minds, improves our health and enriches the education of our children and lifelong learning.
 - **Creates A Sense Of Pride In Our Communities** - Culture helps define the character of a community. Residents feel a sense of pride in their unique local landmarks and history. Culture attracts new residents and keeps current residents in the community.
 - **Encourages Social Cohesion** - Culture engages citizens in activities that help build a sense of community. It celebrates different cultures and helps newcomers feel welcome.
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1 Background Review

1.1 RDFFG Funded Cultural Sites

As with the previous cultural plans, the *Cultural Plan 2016-2020* will review progress made in implementing recommendations set out in the 2010 Cultural Plan by the following eight (8) sites both individually and collectively.

- Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum
- Huble Homestead Historic Site
- Mackenzie and District Museum
- The Exploration Place
- Two Rivers Gallery
- Valemount and Area Museum and Archives
- Valley Museum and Archives
- Whistle Stop Gallery

1.1.1 Cultural Sites Overview

Since 2010, there has been considerable improvement with consistent data collection by all sites for reporting purposes. A key component and focus of the Cultural Strategic Plan 2011-2015 was to improve consistent data collection. Establishing consistency and continuity in data collection is necessary to track and assess results and performance over time.

The hiring of the Cultural Coordinator to support cultural development in the Region has benefited all sites, but particularly those smaller sites with limited staff and resources. The Cultural Coordinator's responsibility for managing the GRMP has also contributed to expanded awareness of culture and heritage in the region. It is believed that this awareness has resulted in increased attendance, although a direct causal link is difficult to confirm. All sites interviewed believed GRMP had increased visitors to their sites.

The past five years has seen the RDFFG fund a total of approximately \$7 million to the cultural sites. As demonstrated below, all sites have witnessed an increase in funding from RDFFG over the period from 2010 to 2014.

FIGURE 1: RDFFG GRANT ALLOTMENTS PER SITE, 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 170,000	\$ 170,000
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 170,000	\$ 170,000
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 27,000	\$ 28,000	\$ 28,000
The Exploration Place	\$ 700,000	\$ 700,000	\$ 720,000	\$ 730,000	\$ 730,000
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 425,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 440,000	\$ 445,000	\$ 460,000
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 25,000	\$ 28,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 32,000
Valley Museum and Archives	\$ 25,128	\$ 25,618	\$ 28,200	\$ 28,000	\$ 28,000
Whistle Stop Gallery	\$ 32,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 34,000	\$ 34,000	\$ 35,000



Similarly, the majority of sites have witnessed increases to their annual operating budgets.

FIGURE 2: TOTAL OPERATING BUDGETS PER SITE, 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 397,216	\$ 340,877	\$ 467,308	\$ 363,182	\$ 340,707
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 291,915	\$ 292,997	\$ 296,895	\$ 287,070	\$ 323,240
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	\$ 42,072	\$ 38,175	\$ 74,615	\$ 81,804	\$ 64,035
The Exploration Place	\$ 1,351,474	\$ 1,345,271	\$ 1,483,132	\$ 1,537,536	\$ 1,644,150
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 952,869	\$ 986,605	\$ 964,201	\$ 1,194,662	\$ 1,299,752
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 56,015	\$ 58,043	\$ 58,819	\$ 61,429	\$ 66,036
Valley Museum and Archives	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 27,000	\$ 30,100	\$ 28,000
Whistle Stop Gallery	\$ 97,168	\$ 85,648	\$ 93,693	\$ 92,199	\$ 113,159

Both measures point to the overall health and vitality in culture and heritage sites in the region.

1.1.2 Cultural Sites' Progress Reports

A survey was distributed to all sites asking a series of questions related to the progress in implementing recommendations from the previous 2010 Cultural Plan. Replies to the survey were uneven. What follows below is a condensed version of replies.

Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum

The Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum celebrates resource industries that built the region — namely forestry and railway, as well as other sectors such as mining. The Museum boasts several temporary indoor exhibits throughout the year, acres of outdoor artifacts including steam, electric and diesel locomotives, a massive wooden snowplow, box cars, baggage cars and cabooses, as well as a display of forestry equipment, including a large display of chainsaws. The Museum has nine historical buildings including the original Penny train station. The archives, gift shop, main gallery and offices are located in the museum's visitor centre, a replica train station. Photographs in the museum illustrate the remarkable job contractors undertook in building roads, homes, and mills.

The museum hosts annual events such as the Friends of Thomas Days and the Celebration of Lights which make the museum a hive of activity for young and young at heart. The museum is open year round with four (4) full-time staff, supplemented in 2014 by six (6) summer students.

Progress Report

Over the past five years, the Museum focused on strengthening its board of directors, planning and implementing strategies to preserve its large outdoor collection of railway and forest industry antiquities, and locating new sources of earned revenue. The Museum also sought to strengthen the number of community and business partnerships with whom the Museum hopes to collaborate on future activities.

Initially, the Museum was operated by a volunteer 'hands on' board of directors, who had a limited relationship with the City of Prince George, the RDFFG or the other cultural facilities. The last five years has seen the successful transition from an operational board to a governance board where building and maintaining relationships with cultural facilities is an important responsibility.

In terms of physical upgrades to the site, the most significant accomplishment was to focus on accessibility. To that end, the Museum initiated a capital project, the construction of a pavilion, to house



rail cars currently at risk to the elements. This structure may also serve as a sheltered outdoor display space for smaller artifacts, and will provide accessibility to several rail cars as well as increase the available event space. .

In an endeavour to build mutually beneficial relationships, the Museum started a local food initiative, an urban orchard, by planting in excess of 100 fruit trees and 300 berry bushes. Some of the proceeds will benefit local food banks as well as become a revenue generator by selling produce to various community groups (local winery, and restaurants for example).



Huble Homestead Historic Site

The Huble Homestead Historic Site is located in the Giscome Portage Regional Park and operated by the Huble Homestead /Giscome Portage Heritage Society. The Society's mission is to establish a network of people committed to preserving and developing the history of the Huble Homestead, Giscome Portage, and surrounding area.

The site offers a wide range of public programming featuring entertainment, tours for local organizations, and heritage demonstrations, including blacksmithing, making butter and cheese, etc. These events have become a tradition in many families with grandparents, parents and children participating with one another. Overall Huble Homestead Historic Site offers 10-12 events per year. The financial success of events is always evaluated (supplies and advertising minus donations and store revenue).

Progress Report

In 2011 a cabin on site was moved to create an exhibition space. In 2012, which was also the centennial of the Huble House, an exhibition was installed in the new exhibition space profiling Mr. Seebach who worked with Mr. Huble to establish the General Store. Throughout 2012, the Society offered a wide range of programs tied to the centennial. Another important achievement related to site facilities was the construction of a picnic shelter to support outdoor programming and events.

In 2012 the Society published its first children's book. Three have been produced since 2012 on various aspects or features of the site (the house, garden, store, etc.). Since 2011, two new school programs have been developed focused on local First Nations history, for delivery both on-site and in school classrooms off-site. The site operates a successful General Store selling a variety of goods including food, candy, and work by local and regional artists and artisans. The gift store is run on consignment with 70% going to those individuals producing these goods.



A serious challenge the Museum faces is its aging volunteer base. There has been a concerted effort to recruit youth to the board of the Society but to date this has not been successful.

The site employs four (4) full-time staff, a seasonal store manager and four (4) summer students (supported through a Federal funding program).

Staff noted a number of ways in which the site had gained increased exposure with both local residents and tourists over the past five years:

- The annual portfolio of events has been expanded with a view to attracting audiences of all ages, throughout the summer months
- The GRMP has provided higher profile and also contributes to helping visitors find their way to the Homestead (which can be a challenge)
- A social marketing and Facebook program has been established

Looking forward the site faces a number of challenges. Significant maintenance of the site is required. Among the challenges faced by the site are continued uncertainty regarding funding for school visits owing to disruptions in the education system and increased global economic uncertainties reducing travel by tourists from outside the area, primarily from the United States.

Ongoing improvements to the site for visitors continues to be a major planning priority for the Homestead.



Mackenzie and District Museum

The Town of Mackenzie was built in the middle of a watershed rich in history. Starting with the First Nations through to trappers, prospectors, settlers, dam builders, and now to forestry and mining, the Museum tells the stories of how each group contributed to the growth and development of the valley.

The Museum houses a series of portraits by Marge McDougall, who created oil paintings of First Nation's men and women between the years of 1959 and 1965. Lastly, the museum houses artifacts which include a model of the massive 178-ton tree crusher used during the creation of Williston Lake (Canada's largest man-made lake) from 1964 to 1966.

Presently, a curator is employed full-time and two (2) summer students were hired in 2014 with federal grant funding.



Progress Report

With the arrival of a new museum curator, the Museum has seen a major reorganization over the past four years. This has included updating its collection and displays as well as building partnerships with other organizations. Partnerships include:

- The Tourist Information Centre (operated by the Chamber of Commerce at the junction of Highways 97 and 39) directing visitors to the museum. Effectively this is one way of addressing the Museum's major challenge of being off the major highway going north.
- The Arts Council which operates a number of children's programs throughout the year, and is located in the same building as the Museum.
- The Town of Mackenzie, which owns the building, has provided significant maintenance and other services, taking this responsibility and cost off the Museum's operating budget.
- Exploration Place which has provided significant archival and curatorial support when requested.



Additionally, the Museum has created a Facebook page which draws attention to the site and links through Google to a 360 degree view of the Museum's displays.

Administration continues to be a challenge with only one staff person and the challenge of getting visitors to recognize that admittance is by donation. Like other sites, the Museum struggles to attract out-of-town visitors with most current visits drawn from the local and regional area. It is estimated that local people account for approximately 70% of visitors. Some of these local and regional visitors do bring out-of-town guests as a way of orienting them to the history of the community.

The Exploration Place

The Exploration Place Science Centre and Museum provides opportunities for visitors to discover local history, explore hands-on science, and enjoy regularly changing exhibits.

The site has a licensed pre-school and after school program as well as summer day camps with its own vehicles to transport children. The Explorers Urban Garden Program is a participant-driven community garden cared for and operated by preschool, after-school care and summer camp participants and staff. In the summer months, Exploration Place operates a gift shop that offers souvenirs, snacks and beverages.

Exploration Place is open year round, seven days per week and has eighteen (18) full-time (two are three-quarter time) and thirteen (13) part-time staff, with ten (10) summer students hired in 2014.

Engaging regional residents through continuously changing heritage, culture and science programs and activity is an ongoing and time consuming process but Exploration Place works toward this goal. One high profile event in 2014 was a visit by Canadian Astronaut Chris Hadfield, attracting more than one thousand people. Another was working closely with the 2015 Canada Winter Games to provide a strong cultural component.



Progress Report

In the past five years, the site has worked to increase its local and regional visitors through changing programs and events. A major achievement was the development of the George Philips Exhibition Gallery designed to host exhibitions from other organizations. However, even with a dedicated gallery space, hosting these exhibitions is extremely costly. Exploration Place is working on plans to address this challenge. Additionally, in accordance with its service agreement with RDFFG, Exploration Place provides professional and curatorial support to the smaller sites.

The organization is increasingly seen in the community as a safe place for discussions and debates on difficult or controversial topics.

Exploration Place has established a “state of the art” curatorial centre and has offered access and use of the facility to all sites in the RDFFG program. Exploration Place has also worked to establish a strong relationship with the Lheidli T’enneh Nation resulting in the negotiation of the storage of this First Nation’s artifacts and archives in the curatorial centre. As previously noted, strengthening relationships with First Nations was a strong theme in the 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan.

Exploration Place has worked closely with the GRMP while still pursuing its own marketing and promotion channels.



Two Rivers Gallery

Constructed to the highest professional standards in order that it can host exhibitions of national and international calibre, the Two Rivers Gallery is the centre for creativity in the region.

Like most museums, Two Rivers Gallery continues to work to remain relevant in the local and regional community. A range of Gallery programs are designed to connect with the public. One such program is the Make Art Make Sense program which provides “hands-on” opportunities for participants to engage with a form of visual arts expression of their choosing. In partnership with BMO the Gallery hosts the annual BMO KidzArt Dayz, a free family event reaching over 5000 people and Menagerie, a Halloween party for adults.

A significant achievement that also helps challenge these perceptions is the establishment of the MakerLab. The MakerLab brings together diverse range of creative people working in everything from electronics to wood turning and metal smithing to 3D printing, and making a variety of products from cards to solar vehicles. The Shop at the Gallery offers a wide variety of quality craft and gift items. The



upstairs Atrium and studios feature art classes, special events and creative play for young children in the Wildside.

The Gallery offers a well-developed program of contemporary art exhibitions and has exhibited important work from the National Gallery of Canada and other significant public collections. Two Rivers Gallery is run by the nonprofit Prince George Regional Art Gallery Association with a mission to:

- Encourage lifelong learning through the art
- Create an environment for vigorous artistic and cultural expression
- Provide opportunities for diverse experiences through participation and exhibition.

There are eight (8) full-time and eleven (9) part-time employees and three (2) contract staff. Five (5) summer students were hired with federal funding

The Gallery continues to assist other RDIFFG sites in developing traveling exhibitions

Progress Report

Over the past five years, Two Rivers Gallery has made progress on its strategic goals and achievements consistent with the recommendations of the previous Cultural Plan. In 2014, the Gallery:

- Made significant progress in strengthening relationships with Aboriginal communities, including the recruitment of a First Nations band councillor and artist to their board of trustees
- In 2014 the Gallery was recognized as a “bright spot” by the Canada Council for the Arts and the British Columbia Arts Council. This was in recognition of achieving outstanding results with limited resources
- Reviewed and revised their visual identity
- Produced various exhibits including Nekeyoh (the Dakelh word meaning our home) in collaboration with a broad range of partners including the Lheidli T’enneh, UNBC, CBC, the Prince George Friendship Centre and the Health Arts Research Centre
- MakerLab – a BCMA award for introducing new audiences and changing the perception of the Gallery in community, region and the museum community
- Secured several new corporate sponsorships
- Expanded partnerships with more community groups
- Worked with the University Hospital on a range of innovations linking art and health, and been awarded a Health and Wellness Innovator of the Year Award at the Healthier You conference.

Valemount and Area Museum and Archives

The Valemount Museum, located in the historic Valemount Railway Station, has displays on rail camps and towns, a model railway, Japanese Internment Camp, Valemount Pioneers and War Heroes, Margaret McKirdy sculptures, James Vanslyk Art, a Pioneer Kitchen, Early Settlers stories and items, and an Outfitting and Trapper’s Cabin. Outside the station are a restored CN Caboose and a display of logging and farming artifacts. The Museum has a gift shop, and sales have been growing rapidly despite the limited display space available.



Staff includes a part-time administrator, a part-time coordinator and two (2) summer students. The students assist with exhibits, running programs, organizing events, guiding visitors, research requests, working on current grant projects and running the Children's Heritage Summer Program which has seen its attendance more than double due to stronger marketing efforts. The site is open from May (when school groups begin to wind down) and closes for the season in September.

The facility has made a significant shift in its thinking about increasing visitor attendance. Revenues derived from special events had been in decline for several years. Rather than continue this strategy there has been a shift to focus more on tourism and tourism marketing which has become a major driver of revenues.

Progress Report

In Valemount, it is evident that the marketing efforts of the GRMP have had an impact on the Museum. Visitation coupons are redeemed regularly and customers are made aware of the site through the radio and television advertisements. Local newspaper and magazine advertisements also bring awareness to museum events. Like all small sites, the GRMP enables the site to use its modest marketing budget in a focused and targeted way. The addition of the Cultural Coordinator to the overall program has been of enormous benefit.

- The Learning Centre has assisted with various human resources and training related issues.
- The local Community TV station promotes the Museum and provides coverage for their events.

Building relationships with local schools is challenging since the Museum is only open from the May long-weekend when the school programs are winding down. The Museum has been diversifying its programs and visibility in the community for both tourists and local residents. New ideas have included geocaching and outdoor concerts on the grounds of the museum; these do not necessarily get people inside the Museum, but they do increase local awareness of its existence and programming. The site has identified the need to focus more attention on First Nations heritage and culture as a priority it must address through programming.

The Museum does take advantage of professional support as well as traveling exhibitions from the Two Rivers Gallery and Exploration Place.

Over the past few years, it is believed that tourism visitation has grown while local support has dropped due to a struggling local economy. Social media has become a strong tool providing exposure to potential provincial, national and international visitors (more than 50% of visitation is international with the majority from Europe). The Museum has a strong linkage with the Tourist Information Centre, and is well reported on Trip Advisor.

Valemount is often used by tour bus companies as an overnight stop, and this offers opportunities for increased visitation. However the Museum's location away from the main hotel area, and the evening and early morning timing of these guests makes it hard to accommodate. Late evening opening was tried for a number of years, but limited attendance during these hours has caused this to be curtailed in 2015.

The relationship with the Village of Valemount, who are the owners of the Museum building, has improved recently, but the issue of funding for the ongoing and major maintenance that the building requires, is still largely unresolved.



Valley Museum and Archives

The Valley Museum & Archives shares a building with McBride & District Library in an attractive area that draws people for many community events. A significant number of these people visit the Museum and Archives. The Museum is primarily operated by volunteers, with admission by donation. This year, grant funding allows one or two summer students and a part time staff person to be hired.

Some exhibitions/shows are annual events such as children's art and the touring show from Two Rivers Gallery. Every year there is at least one major exhibition over the summer, and two or three other exhibitions during the year. The Museum also has displays on local history in the railway station, in the hospital lobby, and a farm equipment exhibit by the park. It also has developed a website with photographs, stories and information, and a Facebook page where photographs are identified and memories recalled.

The Museum is very restricted in what can be done because of lack of space and is working with the library to acquire a larger building in the centre of McBride. This will also allow the museum to store its archives in an appropriate space, have a semi-permanent exhibit in addition to the changing shows and provide show preparation space.

Progress Report

The focus of the Museum is on continuing to deliver its core programs. Over the past several years volunteers have been involved in a number of innovative endeavors. An old village building was renovated to provide additional storage and an office space for the site's webmaster. Social media was a strong recommendation in the 2010 Cultural Plan and the Museum has created a website and Facebook site and is working to put the archives on line.

Local and tourist visitation has been promoted through the GRMP to a much greater degree than would be possible by the Museum and Archives alone. A representative of the facility expressed the view that GRMP had taken time to become effective for the smaller facilities. Today it has become an effective resource promoting the full range of cultural and heritage places and facilities.

The Museum, often in partnership with the Whistle Stop Gallery, has developed a number of partnerships with other agencies and non-profit societies. Developing an attendance reporting system that captures all the facilities continues to be a challenge for the Museum. Other partnerships are being explored: most



recently, discussion has started with the community of Dunster, whose CN station has potential to be an outreach location for the Museum.



Whistle Stop Gallery

The Whistle Stop Gallery is located in McBride's historic train station which was built in 1919 as a Grand Trunk Pacific Railway divisional point and restored in 2002. The Gallery showcases the work of 96 Robson Valley artists and artisans. In addition to showcasing the diversity of local artisans, the Gallery contributes to the Valley through the sale of artistic works, job creation and by providing youth work experience.

The Gallery attracts thousands of visitors each year, drawn from local and regional locations as well as visitors from the United States and around the world. Visitors see a wide range of original artwork created by members of the non-profit Whistle Stop Gallery Society. McBride's pioneer past can be traced through the many books written about the history of the region by local authors, local photographs and mementos. The Gallery engages with the community through events and other activities including the many murals located around town portraying local talent and local history.

The Gallery employs two part-time staff year round, complemented by a summer student hired with federal grant funding.

In McBride, the Robson Valley Arts and Culture Council (RVACC) provides the umbrella charitable organization for all arts and culture in McBride and area including the Whistle Stop Gallery Society. The Gallery provides some limited administration for RVACC.

Progress Report

There has been a slow but steady increase in tourists visiting the Robson Valley over the past few years. The Gallery's reputation, location and consistent promotional efforts ensure that visitation numbers have remained stable with moderate growth in recent years.

Engaging residents is both an on-going challenge and opportunity at the Whistle Stop Gallery. We have



noticed that the consistent, ongoing, promotion and marketing are having the effect of elevating local pride – community members proudly tour visiting family and friends through the Gallery and displays. The Gallery has become the go-to and must-stop place to visit while in McBride.

The Whistle Stop has partnered with the McBride and District Chamber of Commerce for visitor information operations which has increased walk-in traffic. In addition, this partnership has enabled the Gallery to increase staff hours and extend opening hours in 2013/14. We have also partnered with the McBride and District Library and the Robson Valley Visitor Centre as part of the Canada Day Children's Festival and participated in the 2nd Annual Robson Valley Community Showcase with a booth and arts display.

The Gallery has been able to expand its outreach into the community with a number of public art projects, including murals, the fire hydrant project, art challenges, and juried art shows and exhibits. The Gallery has also had success in engaging students and seniors with art projects and events.

We believe the Gallery is a contributing factor in attracting new residents, with several newcomers to the Robson Valley exhibiting work. The Whistle Stop Gallery has a website, including a well-visited Facebook page. The website has links to other sites and to local attractions.

The Gallery's major challenges relate to aging infrastructure and lack of resources for upgrades and repair. Additionally there is a lack of space which limits the amount of artwork that can be displayed and does not allow for art classes, studio workshops and special shows or events, all of which would enhance the profile of the gallery. Through the Robson Valley Region marketing program, the region is heavily invested in promoting the lifestyle available in the Robson Valley; opportunities for cultural growth and expression are an integral part of that lifestyle

The primary opportunity for the next five year period would be to upgrade the second floor of the train station that is currently unused and in need of restoration and renovation to make it a usable space. This work could be carried out in conjunction with the reroofing of the Station, which is urgently needed. Utilizing the second floor and upgrading to an environmentally friendly heating system would enhance the cultural offerings in the Robson Valley by providing an appropriate venue for activities such as studio demonstrations and art/crafting workshops.

Another opportunity would be to have the resources to hire a part time community outreach worker. This person would be able to coordinate with other user groups and schools to enhance arts and culture expression and learning in the community, assist in the recruitment of volunteers and work with seniors to improve quality of life, a key factor in attracting new residents and professionals to our community. Currently the existing staff is busy with the day to day operation of the Gallery and Visitor Centre, and lacks the time and resources to keep pace with the cultural needs of our community.

1.2 The Wider Cultural Landscape

Clearly the eight (8) RDFFG funded sites are only part of the rich cultural landscape in the region. The following chart captures some of those other organizations and activities.



CULTURAL ORGANIZATION LANDSCAPE

Theatre and Stage

- ❖ Central Interior Highland Dance Association
- ❖ Excalibur Theatre Arts Co.
- ❖ Judy Russel's Enchainment Dance Centre
- ❖ Nechako Community Theatrics Society
- ❖ Prince George Regional Performing Arts Centre
- ❖ Roundhouse Theatre Society
- ❖ Serious Moonlight Productions
- ❖ Theatre North West
- ❖ Wishbone Theatre

Music

- ❖ Alban Classical Artists Society
- ❖ Bel Canto Choirs
- ❖ Blues Underground Network
- ❖ District 57 Tapestry Singers
- ❖ Dovey's Blues News & More
- ❖ Northern Symphony Orchestra
- ❖ Nove Voce Choral Society
- ❖ Prince George Cantata Singer
- ❖ Prince George Community Band
- ❖ Prince George Conservatory of Music
- ❖ Prince George Symphony Orchestra
- ❖ White Spruce City Chorus

Festivals and Events

- ❖ Prince George Dance Festival Association
- ❖ Prince George & District Music Festival Association
- ❖ Prince George Folkfest Society
- ❖ Community Speech Arts & Drama Festival of Prince George
- ❖ Island Mountain Arts Society
- ❖ Prince George Community Radio Society
- ❖ Prince George Council of Seniors
- ❖ Prince George Genealogical Society

Visual Arts

- ❖ 2880 Artists' Workshop
- ❖ Artists' Co-op
- ❖ Prince George Photographic Society
- ❖ Prince George Potters' Guild
- ❖ Prince George Woodturners' Guild
- ❖ Topaz Bead Gallery
- ❖ **Two Rivers Gallery**
- ❖ **Whistle Stop Gallery**

Service Organizations Supporting the Arts and Culture

- ❖ Canadian Federation of University Women
- ❖ Kinsmen Club of Prince George
- ❖ Mackenzie Community Arts Council
- ❖ Prince George Community Foundation
- ❖ Robson Valley Arts & Culture Council
- ❖ Royal Purple & Elks
- ❖ Valemount Arts & Cultural Society
- ❖ Valemount Entertainment Society

Heritage

- ❖ **Huble Homestead/ Giscome Portage Heritage Society**
- ❖ Prince George Oral History Group
- ❖ Society of Creative Anachronisms
- ❖ **The Exploration Place**
- ❖ **Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum**
- ❖ **Mackenzie and District Museum Society**
- ❖ **Valemount and Area Museum and Archives**
- ❖ **Valley Museum and Archives**

Multicultural

- ❖ Le Cercle des Canadiens Français de Prince George
- ❖ Multicultural Heritage Society of Prince George
- ❖ Prince George Celtic Club
- ❖ Punjabi Culture Club
- ❖ Yalenka Ukrainian Dancers Society

Fibre Arts

- ❖ Prince George Fibre Arts Guild
- ❖ Prince George Quilters' Guild
- ❖ Prince George Stitchery Guild



Understanding the Broader Planning Context

As part of the assessment of the current context for the development of the new cultural plan, various background reports were reviewed and issues analyzed. These include the following:

- A review of relevant plans and background reports (**Appendix A**)
- A review of demographic trends (**Appendix B**) that is critical to understanding potential shifts in community conditions and needs.
- An analysis of the creative economy (**Appendix C**) to understand the trends that the creative environment in RDFFG that the Cultural Plan can capitalize on to support economic agendas.
- A review of recent developments in Tourism (**Appendix D**) to understand tourism trends that are impacting the Cultural Plan

1.2.1 Cultural Plans

2006 Cultural Plan (2006-2010)

The purpose served by the Plan was to provide the Board of RDFFG with a five year vision for cultural development along with plans to encourage participation, create a financially sustainable structure, foster collaboration, provide funded agencies with funding certainty, develop cultural resources to attract visitors and increase quality of life for residents, and facilitate the adoption of supporting cultural policies.

The findings from the 2006 Cultural Plan indicate that there are eight (8) heritage or cultural institutions funded by the RDFFG and operated by dedicated staff, boards, and volunteers. These facilities are valued by their communities and region as a whole. The resulting economic impact of the eight (8) funded sites in 2006 was \$2.3 million - a significant sum. The 2006 Cultural Plan set forward recommendations aimed at increasing this economic impact.

The 2006 Plan highlighted certain challenges facing all sites. First Nations culture was not well represented in existing institutions. This was identified as a serious gap in the cultural offerings particularly within the smaller facilities located in smaller and more remote communities.

Other challenges included the need to strengthen the linkage between cultural and heritage sites and tourism development across the region. The 2006 Plan noted the weak relationship and need for a dedicated marketing plan and program for culture and heritage. In Prince George, the opportunity of creating a critical mass of cultural institutions in the downtown core was identified as an opportunity.

One approach to tourism development is using a *cultural corridor* model to “connect up” cultural facilities and activities in an area, and to link these cultural resources to related businesses and activities such as hotels, restaurants, outdoor experiences, etc. The goal is providing in a critical mass of activities and experiences large enough to keep people in the community spending money and contributing to the economy. The launch of such an initiative would require collaboration and partnerships among a wide range of cultural, business and community groups and stakeholders. The 2006 Cultural Plan continued to promote and nurture collaboration and cooperation among the eight (8) sites. The 2006 Cultural Plan established the RDFFG Cultural Vision Statement that continues to provide guidance and direction today.

The RDFFG is recognized locally, provincially and nationally for the high quality and diversity of its cultural offerings.



Residents in large numbers attend the events and facilities and are active in telling stories to the region about the cultural activities offered through the RDFFG.

Both domestic and international cultural tourists have put the RDFFG on their lists of places to visit, creating significant positive economic impact with RDFFG.

The cultural institutions and events are experiencing sustained growth due to cultural groups working together collaboratively and cooperatively in planning and developing institutions and events.

The cultural vibrancy of the region has resulted in new businesses locating in the RDFFG and existing businesses and institutions are able to attract a qualified work force.

The 2006 Cultural Plan set out 26 recommendations. Among these actions were the creation of the Cultural Services Advisory Committee and the hiring of a Cultural Coordinator to jointly support the implementation of the Cultural Plan. Important recommendations related to strengthening partnerships and collaboration among the funded sites. The idea of a Regional Story first appeared in the 2006 Plan.

2010 Cultural Strategic Plan (2011 – 2015)

The overall purpose of the 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan was to continue the five-year cycle and prepare an updated Cultural Plan for the period 2011 to 2015. One specific objective was to review the 2006 Plan and evaluate its success in delivering cultural services and in implementing its recommendations. Other objectives included:

- Conduct a background scan to document changes that have occurred within the funding environment since the initial plan was prepared to set the stage for the new plan
- Conduct secondary source research on cultural planning in the region
- Conduct interviews with the eight funded facility cultural agency representatives
- Conduct interviews with other cultural agency representatives
- Prepare a new five-year cultural strategic plan for the Regional District.

The 2011-2015 Cultural Strategic Plan noted that the environment within which the RDFFG-funded sites were operating had changed significantly over the past five-year timeframe of the 2006 Plan. In 2008, the North American economy entered a serious recession. By 2010, there was some improvement in the economy but communities in RDFFG continued to struggle. The economic downturn resulted in a decrease in tourism as people cut their discretionary spending on travel.

Perhaps the more significant change in the operating environment was the dramatic cuts made by the British Columbia government to its financial assistance to culture. These decreases (in the range of 30%) caused significant concern for all eight RDFFG funded sites and cultural organizations across the province.

Compounding these cuts were declines in both corporate and philanthropic support due to harsher competition from community and social service organizations. The net result of this situation was a decrease in support for many of the cultural facilities.

The 2006 Cultural Plan included 26 Recommended Actions. Of the 26 individual recommendations, the 2011-2015 Plan reported that eleven (11) items had been fully accomplished; nine (9) had been partially accomplished; while six (6) had not been implemented. Of those action items that have not been accomplished some had been initiated but with no discernable progress, while others (i.e. cultural corridor) had been deemed to be outside the scope of the Cultural Plan.



The success of the GRMP was analyzed and evaluated in terms of its professional implementation and the degree to which it had succeeded in raising the profile and increasing awareness of and attendance at the sites. While direct causal connections cannot be proven, all sites believed that GRMP had achieved these outcomes.

The 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan, like the 2006 Plan, was guided by the RDFFG Cultural Vision Statement noted earlier. Similar to the 2006 Plan, the 2010 Cultural Plan was also organized around a set of three Goals, each with corresponding Objectives and Tactics. The three overarching Goals from the 2006 Plan remained the same in the 2010, but with new Objectives and Tactics. Proposed Tactics were organized under the following Goals and Objectives.

1. Engage regional residents in heritage and culture by ...

- Enhancing the profile of the regional cultural facilities
- Providing tangible reasons to visit the facilities
- Developing partnerships with other civic organization
- Developing partnerships with local/regional businesses

2. Increase visitation from tourists (non-regional residents) by...

- Expanding the curatorial functions to enhance the product offerings
- Developing a regional heritage story
- Developing a social media strategy
- Maintaining and enhancing the Golden Raven Marketing Program

3. Streamline administration of the cultural services plan by...

- Enhancing the information exchange opportunities of the Cultural Services Advisory Committee (CSAC)
- Developing a consistent facility attendance reporting structure
- Developing a consistent financial performance reporting structure
- Providing professional development opportunities for staff
- Developing criteria for utilizing the CSAC Endowment Fund
- Producing a grant database
- Using cooperative opportunities for staff training
- Considering ways to develop partnerships with other cultural organizations
- Hiring/appointing a cultural coordinator

Beyond the cultural plans a number of other relevant plans were examined to establish the larger planning context in the region. A number of key plans are summarized in Appendix A.

1.3 The Social Value of the Arts and Culture

There has been a great deal of attention paid over the last decade to the economic impact of culture and cultural development. More recently there has been growing attention to social impacts. This research has demonstrated that communities with a vital cultural life also enjoy a variety of benefits including



stronger community and civic engagement, improvements in public health and social stability, and economic revitalization.¹

Unfortunately the majority of work on social impacts has taken place in larger urban centres rather than smaller communities and rural areas similar to Fraser-Fort George. Recently there has been work emerging in Canada and in Australia that can be cited as evidence of the important social outcomes achieved through the cultural investment by RDFFG.

Canada

Arts and cultural organizations and activities act as a “pull factor” for attracting skilled professionals and enterprise to a rural community. A pre-requisite for highly skilled, high-wage residents (including doctors and essential professionals) is an active arts and culture scene. If people are attracted to live and work in a community a significant factor is the quality of life provisions and amenities that include cultural and entertainment activities. A lively cultural scene is also fundamental to projecting and in some cases improving the community’s image.²

Among the well-recognized challenges facing rural regions are declining and aging populations, problems with youth retention, limited economic and social opportunities for residents, depleting natural resources, loss of local services, and higher costs of living (in some communities).

In the search for social and economic renewal, regions such Fraser-Fort George are seeking to diversify their economic base, provide strong public services, and enhance quality of life. Regional collaboration has become essential (as exemplified by the District’s cultural program) and is not at odds with individual communities wanting a clear sense of self and identity³ In the midst of transition, many communities are recognizing that the ways the community understands itself, celebrates itself, and expresses itself are major contributing factors to its ability to withstand major social and economic changes. Arts, culture, and heritage are viewed not only as amenities to improve the quality of life, but as a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rests. The arts and creative activities can profoundly affect the ability of a town not only to survive over time, but to thrive.⁴

Australia

A major driver in the attention given to the social impacts of the arts and culture in Australia is depopulation pressures in rural parts of the country.⁵ Governments are looking for multi-faceted strategies to keep people in communities. Arts, culture and creativity has been demonstrated to contribute in significant ways to the development and revitalization of rural and remote communities.

There have been two lines of study and reporting on these issues. The first is the “creative industries” line of inquiry that places more emphasis on cultivating the arts and creative initiatives or enterprises with demonstrated impact in a range of domains (environmental, social, and cultural) but the dominant focus has been on economic impacts.

¹ See the Social Impact of the Arts Project at the University of Pennsylvania <http://impact.sp2.upenn.edu/siap/>

² The Business for the Arts. (2009). A strategic and economic business case for private and public sector investments in the arts in Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessforthearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BfA-business-case-for-funding-the-arts.pdf>

³ Nancy Duxbury and Heather Campbell (2011). Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities Through Arts and Culture. Small Cities Imprint. Vol. 2, No. 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kim Dunphy (2013). Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities Through Arts and Creativity. Cultural Development Network



The creative industries approach is contrasted with what is called the “community development” approach, which places a greater focus on social outcomes, including health and well-being, social inclusion, and educational achievements. Also examined are arguments that ascribe value to the cultural dimension in its own right, in which the intrinsic value of arts and creativity for rural and remote communities is recognized.

The following factors have been identified as critical to building long-term sustainability for culture and creativity in rural communities, with their accompanying social impacts:

- Appreciation of local culture, history and heritage, local people, assets and characteristics
- Enthusiastic local leadership, positive attitudes, local entrepreneurship and investment
- Right timing and a focus on retaining young people through employment, recreational, and educational initiatives

However, in examining all the research and community experience the most fundamental factor needed to sustain these activities and their benefits is the necessity of government commitment (at all levels) to the value of cultural dimension in all areas of planning and public policy. Other factors include the need for recognition of the value of local cultural product and practices; more support for arts in communities, especially through networks of regional arts development officers; assistance for volunteers (including training); and reduction of bureaucratic obstacles. Also suggested are better funding programs, including long-term investment and less onerous application processes, as well as data collection about arts and heritage activities and outcomes at a local level.

1.4 Regional Cultural Planning and Development

The Creative City Network (CCN) report *Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities through Arts and Culture*⁶ examines cultural development in small towns and larger rural areas. The report found that cultural activities support capacity building, empowerment, collaboration, expanded networking opportunities, and transformation.

The report notes that opportunities for cultural development lie with youth, artists and creative entrepreneurs, and urban-to-rural migrants. Youth engagement is fundamental to population retention. Efforts include skill-building programs to support a workforce capable of attracting new creative industries and conversely allowing youth to remain in their own community in lieu of moving for either education or employment reasons. This report indicates that the artist and creative entrepreneurs in the community and urban-to-rural migrants act as a bulwark for growth as they tend to have established networks and businesses and often take a leadership role in community initiatives.

Additionally, the report highlights that a critical factor in the success of cultural development in a rural context is the availability of broadband. This digital connectivity helps attract and connect individuals working within the creative industries, supports the sharing of cultural practices, and allows for enhanced marketing tools and opportunities.

The report finds that the recurring ingredients for cultural-led regeneration and development in rural or small town settings include:

⁶ Creative City Network of Canada (2009). *Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities Through Arts and Culture*. Retrieved from: http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/rural_arts_summ_overview.pdf



1. The need for an underlying appreciation and attitude of acceptance toward local culture, history, people and assets, and a community's sense of place
2. The valuing of the arts in everyday life, and an inclusive encouragement of broad-based participation
3. The requirement of key leaders representing the broad community, and a community-based coalition willing to work towards a common goal
4. The use of social networks as a key to gather volunteers and arts supporters who work on exhibitions, festivals, community cultural development projects; support artists in their community-regeneration efforts; and inclusively encourage cultural vibrancy throughout the community
5. The need to develop cultural facilities and infrastructure as essential gathering places - functioning as a cornerstone of community cohesion and community building. Support for this infrastructure, either as part of new developments or as maintenance of existing facilities, is essential to create a visible focus of efforts and to offer a physical point of contact for diverse community groups

The report advocates for a capacity building approach to regional development. Capacity building focuses on facilitating development rather than doing projects or tasks. It was found that social infrastructure (social networks) are more important in regional development than more traditional factors influencing growth (i.e. population size). This involves several key factors including expanding citizenship participation, expanding leadership base, strengthened individual skills, strategic community agenda, and better resource utilization.

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has made a significant investment of dollars and staff time over the past five years in promoting municipal cultural planning in the province. A \$9 million four year program was launched called the Creative Communities Prosperity Fund. The program is now closed but more than 50 municipalities in the province from large urban to small rural communities undertook cultural planning processes. An evaluation of the program was conducted. The conclusion was that the program had been an unqualified success in shifting attitudes in the municipality and in the community about the importance cultural planning and development to building strong local and regional economies and enhancing quality of life in communities.

The Ministry commissioned a series of documents and report. The two most significant were *Municipal Cultural Planning: A Toolkit for Ontario Municipalities*⁷ and *Municipal Cultural Planning Indicators and Performance Measures Guidebook*.⁸

The Ministry defined cultural planning *as a place-based approach to planning and development. It is a process for identifying and leveraging a community's cultural resources, strengthening the management of those resources, and integrating those resources across all facets of local planning and decision making.*

⁷ http://www.ontariomcp.ca/toolkits/MunicipalCulturalPlanning_AToolkitForOntarioMunicipalities_digital.pdf

⁸ http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/culture/cul_planning.shtml



2 Previous Cultural Plan Reviews

As part of the 2015 Cultural Strategic Plan review process, surveys were distributed to all eight funded sites seeking feedback on recommended actions and priorities from the two previous cultural plans, including identifying those recommendations that remain relevant today. Responses to the survey were uneven, but shared ideas and responses are summarized below.

2.1 2006 Cultural Plan Review

2006 Cultural Plan Priorities

Priority	Further Action
Identify community leaders to champion the further development and implementation of the cultural plan.	Requires ongoing efforts to continuously identify community leaders to champion the role and contribution of culture within RDFFG.
Employ strategies or tactics to engage residents in the cultural life of the community.	Ongoing action is required. This should be a priority for the 2015/2020 cultural plan.
Create a communication plan as part of the work of the RDFFG Cultural Services Advisory Committee.	Ongoing action is required but resources required. This should be a priority for the 2015/2020 cultural plan.
Organize an annual forum for people working in the cultural sector.	A priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.
Create a list of local experts that people in the region can call on for assistance.	Limited action undertaken to date. Some expressed skepticism about the feasibility of such a database but the majority felt it should be a priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.
Require all RDFFG funded facilities to prepare a five-year strategic plan and an annual operating plan.	Ongoing priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan. Need some means of enforcing this requirement.



2006 Cultural Plan Priorities

Priority	Further Action
Require all RDFFG funded facilities to use a standardized data collection system as per the template described.	The current system is adequate but attention must be given to the limited capacity for some of the smaller volunteer-based sites to collect extensive or complex reporting data. A basic set of core performance measures should be defined and implemented for the small sites, with potentially further measures for the larger sites. Ongoing priority for 2016-2020.
Develop funding objectives for each RDFFG cultural client.	Ongoing priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.
Encourage joint actions to deal with common issues such as marketing, brand development, financial management, fund-raising etc.	Ongoing priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.
Leverage funds from Federal, Provincial and private sector using RDFFG's core operating funding commitments.	Action underway. Ongoing priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.
Standardize all reporting procedures on financial reporting and accounting, employment and attendance.	As above, a basic system is in place using the measures identified in the Annual Cultural Report. Again, consideration must be given to the capacity of the smaller sites to manage this reporting (not all 8 sites are able to report on all the Annual Cultural Report measures).
Require all cultural agencies funded by RDFFG to provide annually both quantitative and qualitative measures of performance.	An ongoing priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan with acknowledgement of the limited capacity to undertake this work in some sites
Adopt performance measures that measure the impact of the Cultural Plan on the whole region.	A priority for the 2016-2020 Cultural Plan.

2.2 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan Review

The 2010 Cultural Strategic Plan was developed with the same overarching goals developed for the 2006 Cultural Plan. However, the 2010 Plan expanded on that framework with new objectives and tactics. The intention of the 2010 Plan was to provide RDFFG and its cultural sites with a clear set of priorities that would guide cultural development but also to promote stronger measures and indicators of success.



The survey distributed to the cultural sites asked for each site to comment on the degree of success it had in implementing the objectives and tactics from the 2010 Plan. The quality of responses varied significantly across the eight (8) sites. The following chart synthesizes responses from those sites that did respond.

Goal, Objective and Tactics	Cultural Site Comments
<p>Goal 1: Engage regional residents in heritage and culture</p> <p>Objectives and Tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the profile of the regional cultural facilities ▪ Provide tangible reasons to visit the facilities ▪ Develop partnerships with other civic organizations ▪ Develop partnerships with local/regional businesses 	<p>The cultural sites noted that Goal 1 objectives and tactics succeeded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building stronger brand recognition but at a slower pace than anticipated. Continued efforts are needed here in the 2016-2020 Plan. ▪ Providing strong and changing exhibitions and hosting interesting programs or events. All sites have implemented these strategies but the smaller sites were challenged in doing more due to limited resources. ▪ Strengthening relationships among RDFFG sites significantly stronger today that they were at the time of the 2010 plan. GRMP has contributed to building these partnerships. ▪ (To varying degrees across sites) building partnerships with businesses and civic organizations. Cultivating these relationships takes time and the two large sites were the most successful in building these connections.
<p>Goal 2: Increase visitation from tourists (non-regional residents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand the curatorial functions to enhance the product offerings ▪ Develop a regional heritage story ▪ Develop a social media strategy ▪ Maintain and enhance the Golden Raven marketing program 	<p>Sites have made every effort to enhance and change programs and exhibitions. All have succeeded to some extent with larger institutions having the most success.</p> <p>There has been no progress on the regional heritage story but it remains a priority.</p> <p>Individual sites have embraced social media to varying degrees. It was suggested that RDFFG and GRMP could assist getting all sites to a basic level of social media competence.</p> <p>There has been no integrated social media strategy that could connect RDFFG, GRMP, individual funded sites, and other partners.</p> <p>There was consistent praise for GRMP.</p>



Goal, Objective and Tactics	Cultural Site Comments
<p>Goal 3: Streamline administration of the cultural services plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the information exchange opportunities of the CSAC ▪ Develop a consistent facility attendance reporting structure ▪ Develop a consistent financial performance reporting structure ▪ Provide professional development opportunities for staff ▪ Develop criteria for utilizing the CSAC Endowment Fund ▪ Produce a grant database ▪ Utilize cooperative opportunities for staff training ▪ Consider ways to develop partnerships with other cultural organizations ▪ Hire/appoint a cultural coordinator 	<p>Hiring the Cultural Coordinator has had a major impact on the sites individually and collectively. Some believed that the Coordinator should have more authority in supporting cultural development in the region.</p> <p>The CSAC is successful in supporting information exchange but does not meet regularly enough to play a larger role in implementing the Cultural Plan.</p> <p>Additional comments for Goal 3 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The need for the Endowment Fund to be launched based on clear criteria. ▪ Measurement and assessment must acknowledge differing capacities to collect information. ▪ A familiarization tour each spring would be beneficial in educating summer students at the commencement of the heavy tourism season. ▪ Professional development for staff continues to be a challenge.
Additional Comments	
<p>The survey concluded by asking organizations to comment on what priorities would be most important. The following priorities were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build and promote a regional heritage story. ▪ Continue to work on the branding/re-branding of the area. ▪ Release Endowment Fund interest for significant capital and other projects/purposes. ▪ Provide training and networking opportunities in cultural/recreational tourism. ▪ Build incentives for developing partnerships with other civic organizations and with local/regional businesses. 	



3 Engagement Themes

In early June 2015, a series of interviews were completed with senior staff (including volunteer leaders) and/or members from the eight (8) funded sites. Later in the process, telephone interviews were conducted with the Board Chairs for the eight (8) funded organizations

Interviews with the eight (8) sites was extended to include business and community groups including Prince George Council of Seniors, Tourism Prince George, Initiatives PG, Chamber of Commerce and a number of important cultural organizations in the region. All interviewees received an interview in advance.

The consultation process also involved regional focus group discussions in McBride, Mackenzie and Valemount that brought together a range of interested and engaged individuals and stakeholders. Lastly, the Cultural Services Advisory Committee was consulted.

There was a high degree of consensus on issues emerging from the interviews and focus groups. Themes drawn from these consultation activities are set out in the following section.

3.1 Administration and Governance

A strong theme emerging from the consultations dealt with a range of administrative and governance issues. Two broad issues were raised.

Funding and Finances

- The stable five-year funding from the RDFFG provides a base from which to manage the sites and provides some “space” within which to pursue innovation. Despite this predictable base funding, all sites are continuously searching for additional resources needed from the public, private and philanthropic sectors to strengthen and sustain their organization and support new programming.
- Financial pressures are driving innovative programs in sites such as the pre-school and after school programs at Exploration Place and the urban garden at the Railway and Forestry Museum.
- Social enterprise has been a topic of conversation after Two River Gallery established the Maker Lab. Startup Prince George is a resource that can support establishing social enterprises while continuing to provide support to entrepreneurs and small enterprises.
- Lists of available funding sources are provided in **Appendix E**.

Service Agreements

- A wide range of suggestions was made related to the agreements signed with the RDFFG every five years connected to the five (5) year funding cycle. A number of these issues were raised in both the 2006 and 2010 Cultural Plans but have yet to be resolved.
 - Agreements should be understood as *service agreements* not grant applications.
 - Each of the funded facilities should prepare a five-year strategic plan to be tabled with the RDFFG; this should be accompanied by an annual operating plan that advances the longer-term strategic plan.



- All funded facilities should use standardized data collection systems and measures; one suggestion was to use the nine measures/indicators used by each site for the Annual Cultural Reports.
 - Require all funded sites to provide both quantitative and qualitative measures of performance; feedback and testimonies from visitors could be one form of qualitative information and measures.
 - Adopt some performance measures that measure the impact of the Cultural Plan on the whole region.
 - A number of the smaller funded sites felt that whatever measures were determined must take into account the population of the community and the level of staff support.
- There currently is no meaningful mechanism to hold sites accountable at the end of their funding contract. One suggestion was that senior staff and the site's board meet with RDFFG to review the site's achievements and challenges over the past five (5) years.

3.2 The Endowment Fund and Capital Financial Pressures

One of the strongest and most consistent messages heard during the consultation process was the need to open up access to the Endowment Fund. Issues discussed included:

- That clear criteria to access the Fund must be defined
- That the job description of the Cultural Coordinator already includes administration of the Fund
- That all eight (8) sites identified significant capital facility needs that are unlikely to be undertaken without funding from the Endowment Fund. These funds can then be used to leverage funding from other sources
- That the Endowment Fund could also support the implementation of key recommendations in the new Cultural Plan
- That a collaborative approach to seeking Endowment Funds be considered. In this scenario a collective decision would be made each year on the organization with the most pressing capital facility needs; decisions and applications would rotate to ensure equal access to the funds
- A number of individuals noted that potential Accessibility Legislation of the Province may force investment in facility infrastructure. Support from the Endowment Fund would be critical to helping leverage funds from other sources and meet these new accessibility requirements

3.3 Collaboration and Partnerships

Both the 2006 and 2010 Cultural Plans placed a strong focus on encouraging partnerships and collaboration among the funded sites. While more can always be done, there was strong consensus that all sites had embraced collaboration as a fundamental assumption in their operations

Both Two Rivers Gallery and Exploration Place are formally mandated through their service agreement to provide curatorial and professional technical services to the other sites. This support was highly valued and praised by the other sites.

Other suggestions for supporting and reinforcing collaboration included the following:



- The need for at least one ‘umbrella’ event a year that celebrates all the facilities
- The opportunity should be taken to visit each other’s sites in the off season (although recognizing that several sites are closed in the off-season)
- A collaborative approach to volunteer recruitment could be implemented, potentially working with Volunteer Prince George
- A familiarization tour to all sites be established for all summer students in the spring
- The exploration of possible group insurance for the sites
- Investigating the feasibility of reciprocal membership for all sites
- The organization of fewer but larger collaborative festivals with the capacity to attract people from further afield
- Encouraging all sites to take advantage of the archival and curatorial centre established at Exploration Place; the archival facility also supports the digitization of collections making them accessible online
- A number of sites are seeking opportunities to build partnerships with the University of Northern British Columbia and/or the College of New Caledonia.

3.4 First Nations Interests and Needs

- Addressing the cultural needs and aspirations of First Nations communities is recognized as a priority for all sites.
- Exploration Place, Two Rivers Gallery and Huble Homestead Historic Site were singled out for the successful work with First Nations they had completed.
- Building relationships with First Nations is often challenging because they are tied up in larger reconciliation and land claims issues.
- Some felt that the 2015 Winter Games (in which First Nations had been a strong partner) would help improve relations but is still too early to tell.
- It should be noted that diversity in the region is not restricted to First Nations and that sites be welcoming and inclusive in programming for new immigrants and individuals belonging to diverse communities in the region.

3.5 Expanded Role for Cultural Services Advisory Committee and the Cultural Coordinator

- A range of comments was made related to a potentially larger role for the CSAC, supported by an expanded leadership role for the Cultural Coordinator and RDFFG.
- The CSAC is mandated to support implementation of the Cultural Plan and support ongoing communication among the sites. While the group does support information exchange and communication, it was felt the Committee did not meet often enough to assume a leadership role in



helping implement the Cultural Plan. It was felt the Committee could play a stronger role if adequately supported by the Cultural Coordinator, and with additional travel funding.

- It is worth re-examining the membership of the CSAC; for example representation from the business and academic communities could be considered.
- The current job description for the Cultural Coordinator position set out in the 2010 Cultural Plan called for a larger leadership role than is currently being implemented.
- The Cultural Coordinator position is not fulfilling all its potential because of the high percentage of time invested in the GRMP.
- Consideration could be given to reducing certain aspects of the current GRMP in order that time is freed up for the Coordinator to support the CSAC and implementing the Cultural Plan.
- There was a call to create a communication plan as part of the work of CSAC.

3.6 Expanding Regional Cultural Development

While the focus of the Cultural Plan is on the eight (8) funded sites, a range of ideas emerged related to wider cultural development opportunities in the region. These include:

- The RDFFG has a powerful role to play as a 'convenor' - bringing diverse groups together to explore shared interests and needs
- In addition to reaching out to other heritage and cultural organizations and facilities, the network could be expanded to include communication with the City of Prince George and other municipalities in the area
- An Annual Cultural Summit should be organized for people working in the cultural sector across the region. This has been a recommendation in the 2006 and 2010 Cultural Plans. The purpose would be to bring people together to learn, share ideas and build networks. It could also act as a forum to identify opportunities for collaborative projects or initiatives
- Engaging other sites in the region will offer visitors a broader range of cultural assets and experiences
- The City of Prince George and other municipalities in the region provide funding for cultural facilities and activities and could be brought into a conversation with RDFFG about potential collaboration

3.7 Engaging Local and Regional Residents

- Continue to focus on the objectives and tactics identified in the 2010 Cultural Plan related to increasing local and regional attendance namely:
 - Enhance the profile of regional cultural facilities
 - Provide tangible reasons to visit the facilities
 - Develop partnerships with other civic organizations
 - Develop partnerships with local/regional businesses.



- Continue current efforts to offer a diversity of programming including youth, seniors, intergenerational programs, etc. Building a broad and diverse audience place also supports long-term organizational health and sustainability.
- Youth programs in particular are important to the quality of life that is a magnet for new residents and a professional workforce.

3.8 The Need for a Regional Story

A recommendation in both the 2006 and 2010 Cultural Plans was for the creation of an overarching regional story. The story would define a larger context within which individual sites could present their portion of the overarching narrative. Ideas generated for the regional story include:

- The story must be authentic and inclusive if it is to be effective
- The regional story could inform the development of an interpretive plan providing guidance and support in mounting programs and exhibitions at specific sites
- That Exploration Place could be the hub providing the overview of the story
- That the regional story could set a context for a regional oral history project
- The regional story could also link to a regional curatorial policy/plan. This policy or plan would support collections management and inform decision-making regarding new collections
- The regional story could suggest a theme for a major new “signature festival” that would draw attendance from outside the area and contribute to building a cultural brand for the region

3.9 Golden Raven Marketing Program

- There was strong praise for the Program from everyone. For the smaller sites, the existence of the Program enabled them to use their own modest marketing budgets in focused and strategic ways. Larger sites continued to be strong supporters but also invest significantly in their own marketing programs.
- The joint brochure and quarterly newsletter were praised. Print ads in magazines were also praised although improved design is desired.
- The Program has had a larger impact than simply marketing the sites; it has been instrumental in building a “culture of collaboration” among the sites.
- While promotion and marketing is a core function of the Program, one of the most important purposes is to communicate that culture is important to the region socially and economically.
- There is a need to bring all sites up to a basic level of social media capacity. RDIFFG has the ability to complete this task
- As recommended in the 2010 Cultural Plan, a regional social media strategy should be investigated that could potentially connect a wide range of public-private- and voluntary sector stakeholders. The strategy would build on the existing GRMP social media work



- Achievements in social media could be considered as performance measures for the Service Agreements (e.g. number of hits on websites, Facebook visits, leveraging key websites such as Trip Advisor, etc.)
- Visitors to the sites should be encouraged to fill in feedback forms that will capture testimonials that can then be used on travel rating websites

3.10 Tourism Development

A range of points was made regarding tourism development

- The diversity of sites in the region is one of its strongest tourism assets.
- There is an opportunity to establish partnerships and potential packages with other agencies including accommodation/hotels, restaurants, other regional cultural activities (e.g. theatre, symphony).
- There is a need to implement a visitor questionnaire to better understand the visitor/customer's interests and the quality of their experience; this knowledge is essential for improving onsite programming and also for crafting effective marketing messages and strategies.
- The use of testimonials by visitors about their experience can support traditional marketing as well as social media marketing strategies.
- There was a call for training and networking opportunities related to strengthening skills/knowledge in cultural/heritage tourism.
- Many visitors to the eight sites come from within the region; this market segment called Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is a priority for Prince George Tourism as well as GRMP.
- The Canadian Tourism Commission is going back into the United States market again presenting an opportunity for the region; a typical United States traveler will pass through Prince George on their way to Alaska; the challenge and opportunity is convincing them there are enough things to do and enough heritage and culture to experience to extend their stay in the Fraser-Fort George region.
- Barkerville and the Gold Rush Trail is a provincially recognized initiative; several individuals felt the GRMP could potentially market it more aggressively.
- Yellowhead Highway will be 100 in 2017 and Northern British Columbia is trying to designate it as a cultural heritage place; this is a significant opportunity for the region and the GRMP.
- Destination BC is going to be designating a minimum of three communities to work together with funding support from \$25,000-250,000; they are looking for corridors which fits perfectly with the GRMP, the eight sites and the emerging regional story.
- An entire tourism product plan is being developed for Northern British Columbia; Golden Raven and the sites must be part of that discussion.



4 Evaluating Efficiency and Effectiveness

4.1 Performance of the Cultural System

The 2010 Cultural Plan set forward recommendations aimed at improving the cultural environment in the region. It also noted that evaluating the performance of individual participating sites would be one measure of the Plan's success. A series of statistical measures was proposed to address the criticism of a lack of consistency in measures across the different sites.

The measures were as follows:

Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Attracting people and their spending money on admittance▪ Should be tracked and reported annually▪ Age and origin (in and out of RDFFG)▪ School program attendance▪ Members and volunteers
Financial Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A variety of measures of revenue (earned, fundraised, grants)▪ A variety of measures of expenditures (salaries, operations and programs, management support)
Other measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Media related▪ Event related▪ Community related (volunteer hours, in kind support)
Performance ratios	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Using the above noted statistics, various performance measures could be established and used for comparative purposes▪ On-site visits per exhibit space square footage▪ Operating expenses per on-site visit

Over the past five years, some of these measures have been gathered from the sites and included in the Annual Cultural Reports. This data has been consolidated within this section.

4.1.1 Attendance Measures

Memberships

All sites reported increases in membership over the five-year period except the Huble Homestead Historic Site and the Valemout and Area Museum and Archives.



FIGURE 3: TOTAL MEMBERSHIPS RECORDED 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	71	68	86	187	72
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	63	57	52	47	42
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	24	26	29	43	43
The Exploration Place	729	923	1,045	1,026	1,155
Two Rivers Gallery	248	259	337	475	458
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	30	43	45	32	42
Valley Museum and Archives	10	11	15	85	43
Whistle Stop Gallery	83	86	90	92	95

Visitors

Six of the eight sites reported increases in visitation over the past five years. Several of these saw numbers fluctuate significantly over the five-year period. The Huble Homestead Historic Site and the Valemount and Area Museum (a very small decrease) were the only sites reporting fewer visitors. A caveat must be noted for some of the smaller sites where there is no admission charged. In this situation tracking the number of visitors is challenging and the numbers reported represent estimates only.

FIGURE 4: TOTAL VISITORS RECORDED 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	19,194	17,107	21,127	14,594	20,456
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	7,408	6,872	6,725	6,473	5,893
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	499	403	908	1105	988
The Exploration Place	55,595	63,891	91,622	88,750	91,513
The Exploration Place (Train Passengers) ⁹	-	13,291	3,026	14,197	18,857
Two Rivers Gallery	18,574	19,041	18,668	18,018	30,768
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	1,229	1,389	1,751	1,472	1,135
Valley Museum and Archives	13,532	10,278	12,482	9,490	11,750
Whistle Stop Gallery	14,900	15,100	15,400	15,450	17,175

Volunteers

Consistent with trends in other communities, the number of volunteers decreased for the majority of sites over the five year period, although some by very small numbers. An increase in volunteers was reported by the Valley Museum and Archives, Whistle Stop Gallery (by one) and Valemount and Area Museum. The Mackenzie and District Museum did not change.

FIGURE 5: TOTAL VOLUNTEERS RECORDED 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	153	128	83	75	77
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	91	104	125	75	84
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	9	7	9	12	9
The Exploration Place	22	20	16	20	18

⁹ The train did not run this year.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Two Rivers Gallery	197	128	175	105	99
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	6	26	33	11	20
Valley Museum and Archives	6	10	12	37	18
Whistle Stop Gallery	11	14	19	23	12

4.1.2 Financial Operations

Admission and Program Revenues

Six sites reported on admission and program revenues. Exploration Place and Two Rivers Gallery are sizable operations and managed to increase their revenues every year. The Railway and Forestry Museum was next in line and saw an increase in revenues over the five-year period, with some fluctuations along the way. With the smaller sites revenue was minimal. Although the dollar amount is relatively low, the Mackenzie and District Museum tripled its admission and program revenues.

FIGURE 6: ADMISSION AND PROGRAM REVENUES 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 26,980	\$ 30,667	\$ 47,492	\$ 47,476	\$ 41,846
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 12,199	\$ 12,189	\$ 12,007	\$ 13,082	\$ 12,214
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	\$ 383	\$ 178	\$ 595	\$ 977	\$ 998
The Exploration Place	\$ 366,876	\$ 398,722	\$ 422,095	\$ 453,121	\$ 458,117
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 128,487	\$ 171,372	\$ 174,866	\$ 220,764	\$ 210,498
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 1,720	\$ 2,066	\$ 2,569	\$ 2,667	\$ 2,384

Fundraising Revenues

Four sites reported on fundraising revenue. All sites faced fundraising challenges due to an uncertain economy. The only site reporting a decline in fundraising revenue during the period was Two Rivers Gallery.

FIGURE 7: FUNDRAISING REVENUES 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 2,834	\$ 1,170	\$ 3,188	\$ 4,586	\$ 4,767
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 2,071	\$ 2,350	\$ 1,797	\$ 3,740	\$ 2,780
The Exploration Place	\$ 115,610	\$ 197,131	\$ 119,759	\$ 125,387	\$ 131,853
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 58,729	\$ 45,318	\$ 47,777	\$ 58,617	\$ 46,967
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 1,418	\$ 1,762	\$ 6,244	\$ 4,820	\$ 2,069

Gift Shop and Other Sales Revenues

Exploration Place noted major increases in revenues, possibly influenced by the opening of the onsite daycare. Two Rivers Gallery also showed an increase although not as dramatic. The remainder of the sites recorded smaller but still important increases. The Huble Homestead Historic Site showed a modest decline.



FIGURE 8: GIFT SHOP AND OTHER SALES REVENUES 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 10,648	\$ 22,674	\$ 27,636	\$ 27,194	\$ 26,841
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 23,668	\$ 23,995	\$ 27,220	\$ 22,483	\$ 21,195
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	\$ 277	\$ 107	\$ 1,181	\$ 437	\$ 1,439
The Exploration Place	\$ 15,914	\$ 35,049	\$ 38,029	\$ 77,310	\$ 113,385
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 63,927	\$ 48,987	\$ 58,149	\$ 78,507	\$ 83,951
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 4,700	\$ 4,705	\$ 4,931	\$ 6,952	\$ 6,737
Whistle Stop Gallery	\$ 54,961	\$ 40,666	\$ 44,803	\$ 38,554	\$ 40,319

Other Grants

Exploration Place and Two Rivers Gallery have been successful in securing other grants and funding sources - increasing their overall revenue significantly over the five year period. The Whistle Stop Gallery and the Huble Homestead Historic Site can also point to significant increases in other funding.

FIGURE 9: OTHER GRANTS 2010-2014

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum	\$ 110,430	\$ 43,607	\$ 32,730	\$ 32,244	\$ 20,400
Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society	\$ 94,540	\$ 48,233	\$ 112,994	\$ 73,176	\$ 72,019
Mackenzie and District Museum Society	\$ 15,743	\$ 11,950	\$ 16,047	\$ 16,859	\$ 17,696
The Exploration Place	\$ 261,116	\$ 205,060	\$ 183,249	\$ 218,416	\$ 307,099
Two Rivers Gallery	\$ 132,007	\$ 100,864	\$ 335,400	\$ 330,858	\$ 442,125
Valemount and Area Museum and Archives	\$ 21,923	\$ 16,662	\$ 20,186	\$ 14,990	\$ 15,876
Valley Museum and Archives	\$ 1,418	\$ 1,762	\$ 6,244	\$ 4,820	\$ 2,069
Whistle Stop Gallery	\$ 6,858	\$ 10,363	\$ 10,410	\$ 15,287	\$ 37,840

4.1.3 Summarizing Performance

All of the statistics provided above are important indicators that provide a picture of the sites' performances over the past five years. It is undeniable that the two largest sites (Exploration Place and Two Rivers Gallery) have the capacity to find new sources of revenue, and in so doing provide them with the resources needed to develop new and innovative programs and services.

The next two sites in terms of funding support from RFFFG (Central British Columbia Railway and Forestry Museum and Huble Homestead Historic Site) saw a mixture of successes and reversals over the five years.

Lastly, the remaining smaller four sites operate in a different environment. These sites are more geographically isolated from urban centres such as Prince George and operate with limited to no staff support. This leaves little time, outside maintaining the day-to-day operation of the site, to seek funds from other sources or innovate in other ways.



4.1.4 Filling Out the Picture

Statistics only tells part of the story of how the eight (8) sites work individually and collectively to enrich life in communities and in the region as a whole. Four facets of this work are described below.

Resident Engagement

Both the 2006 and the 2010 cultural plans noted the importance of connecting with the local community and engaging them in the programs and activities of the sites.

Numbers of members, visitors and volunteers capture some of that engagement. However, a fuller picture is needed. For example, efforts to engage young people and students are important to building a sense of identity or belonging that might keep them in the community after graduation.

Engaging adult residents is clearly important as repeat visitors, museum/gallery members are potent sources of financial donations. In the longer term, the trust established with this population might influence decisions related to contributions of funds or collections.

Cultural Exposure

A fundamental reason why the sites exist is to expose as many residents of the region as possible to the area's many and diverse forms of culture and heritage. This exposure is diverse, encompassing stories of early settlement to the work of contemporary artists and artisans working in the community today.

Cultural and Community Centres

The sites can also serve as places in the community where people can gather to seek information on their community but also as a community gathering place, community issues are discussed and where civic pride and identity are nurtured.

The Regional Story

The development of a coherent and authentic story of the region has been a recommendation in the two previous cultural plans. The intent is to provide an overarching narrative related to the history and culture of the region which would enable individual sites to tell its particular part of the larger story with greater meaning and context.

4.1.5 From Aspirations to Outcomes and Measures

It is often challenging to translate themes such as those noted above into statements of outcomes or performance measures. The following outcomes and measures relate to the first two themes noted above.

Resident Engagement

- The region's young people are knowledgeable about their history through participation in school visits and summer camps
 - Measure: Number of school and other youth visits
 - Measure: Number of summer camps run
- Visiting students are knowledgeable about the region's history through participation in a range of college and university programs
 - Measure: Number of visiting student engagements



- Personal growth of local residents is enhanced
 - Measure: Number of volunteers and number of volunteer hours
- Historic artefacts and archival materials are protected
 - Measure: Number and value of donated artefacts, etc.
- Sense of trust is enhanced
 - Measure: Value of in kind donations

Cultural Exposure

- Local artists can display their work and gain broader recognition.
 - Measure: Number of artists displaying work
- Local artists can sell their work and earn a living
 - Measure: Number of artists selling their work
 - Measure: Gift shop revenues from local artists
- Cultural exposure is broadened through partnering activities
 - Measure: Number of partnerships
- Cultural exposure is broadened through changing programs and events
 - Measures: Number of events, event days and related media coverage
- First Nations history and culture is valued and respected
 - Measure: Specific number of engagements with First Nations communities

Cultural and Community Centres

- Cultural sites is viewed as both a cultural and community centres
 - Measure: Number of uses of sites for community meetings or gathering places
 - Measure: (Where applicable) revenue derived from rental of space
 - Measure: Number of individuals seeking broad information about the region (e.g., other than culture and heritage sites)
- Cultural centres as location for significant community events
 - Measure: Number of on-site events oriented toward broad community rather than heritage/culture activities

The Regional Story

The development of a coherent and authentic story of the region has been a recommendation in the two previous cultural plans. The intent is to provide an overarching narrative related to the history and culture of the region which would enable individual sites to tell its particular part of the larger story with greater meaning and context.

- Improved marketing of heritage and culture in the region



- Measure: Number of marketing pieces/strategies making use of the regional story
- Measure: Number of marketing pieces/strategies picked up by visitor if positioned as overview of the history and culture of area
- Strengthened interpretation at all sites
 - Measure: Number of sites with interpretive plans rooted in the Regional Story
 - Measure: Number of testimonials from visitors speaking to an enriched visit to individual sites due to larger regional story
 - Measure: Number of schools that incorporate the regional story as part of their curriculum

The development of outcomes and measures such as these raises two points. First, in broad terms many of these measures were included in the set of measures proposed by the 2010 Cultural Plan. They have also proven too onerous for many of the sites to collect but may still be within reach of the larger sites. Careful consideration should be given to why this information is being collected and what purpose or value it serves.

4.1.6 Distinguishing Outcomes from Impacts

In any system, it is important to distinguish between outcomes and impacts. The difference is that outcomes are directly within the control of the system, while impacts occur because outcomes are achieved, but are generally beyond the system's control. They can be thought of as higher order or downstream benefits.

The impacts /benefits that accrue from the RDFFG's investment in culture by funding the eight sites can be thought of as follows:

- **Tourists visit the region** – this has been a goal of both the 2006 and 2010 plans, and various strategies have been put in place to add to the attractiveness of the sites to tourists. Part of the mandate of the Golden Raven Marketing Program is to increase tourist visitation.
- **Tourists stay longer in the region** – as with the number of visitors, economic impact of tourism is increased by longer stays (another goal of the GRMP).
- **Community liveability and quality of life is enhanced** – whether through a greater sense of community pride and self-awareness or through the events that happen at the sites, the quality of life for all residents is enhanced.
- **Skilled labour and professionals are attracted to the region** – linked to the quality of life, culture and heritage contribute to the quality of life needed to attract this workforce.
- **“Economic Migrants” (Retirees) are attracted to the region** – retirees from other parts of Canada and the world who are seeking great, affordable places to retire will be attracted to the community.
- **Regional economy is increased** – with movement of people back into the region, or by stemming the flow of people out of the region; the regional economic base is increased.

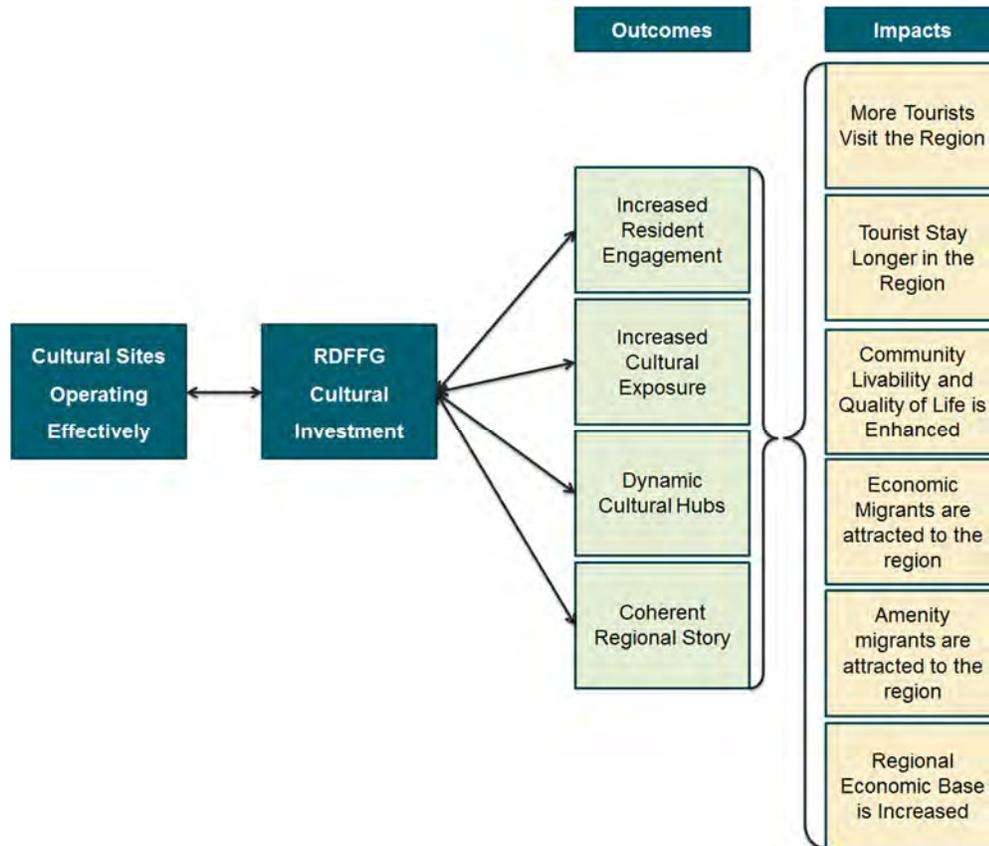
These are all impacts which have been shown in a variety of studies in many jurisdictions to flow in part from an investment in culture. They can be measured, but there is no cause and effect relationship that can be confirmed as each of the impacts is dependent on a multitude of other factors.



4.1.7 Displaying the Cultural System and Its Outcomes and Impacts

The terms of reference for this planning project call for the development of a matrix to demonstrate how cultural places contribute to quality of life in the region. Visually, this would be as follows:

FIGURE 10: OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK





5 2016-2020 Cultural Plan

5.1 Vision

The following RDFFG Cultural Vision Statement was first set out in the 2006 Cultural Plan and included in the 2010 Cultural Plan. It provides a point of continuity across the three Cultural Plans.

The RDFFG is recognized locally, provincially and nationally for the high quality and diversity of its cultural offerings.

Residents in large numbers attend the events and facilities and are active in telling stories to the region about the cultural activities offered through the RDFFG.

Both domestic and international cultural tourists have put the RDFFG on their lists of places to visit, creating significant positive economic impact with RDFFG.

The cultural institutions and events are experiencing sustained growth due to cultural groups working together collaboratively and cooperatively in planning and developing institutions and events.

The cultural vibrancy of the region has resulted in new businesses locating in the RDFFG and existing businesses and institutions are able to attract a qualified work force.

5.2 Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide implementation of the Cultural Plan and ongoing cultural development.

- **Accessibility** – ensure learning opportunities, resources and activities are accessible to all residents and visitors regardless of race or ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.
- **Innovation and responsiveness** – strive for continuous innovation in cultural programs and services to respond to the changing needs of the community
- **Collaboration and communication** – adopt a collaborative approach to advancing cultural development in the region through a commitment to ongoing communication among individuals and organizations
- **Financial viability and accountability** – ensure the most efficient and effective use of RDFFG resources through continuous monitoring and accountability.

5.3 Goals, Objectives and Actions

The recommendations that follow have been organized around a set of high level Goals that are aspirational and long-term. Each Goal is supported by series of Objectives that describe key steps that must be taken to realize the Goal. Finally, Actions are specific tasks or steps needed to implement each Objective.



The Plan should not be considered a finished document. Rather, it should be seen as an informed starting point based on an assessment of where cultural development in Fraser-Fort George finds itself today, along with the expressed needs and aspirations for the future.

There are some important Actions identified in the 2006 or 2010 Cultural Plans that have yet to be implemented but continue to be important and relevant to advancing cultural development in the region. Any Action recommended in previous plans has been placed in italics in the proposed Actions that follow.

Goal 1: Strengthen Collective Leadership		
Objective		Actions
1	Expand the leadership role of the CSAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Revise the terms of reference for the CSAC to communicate a new strategic leadership role in cultural development ■ Examine best practices in cross-sectoral leadership groups in other municipalities ■ Review the current membership of the CSAC and consider (over time) broadening its composition to include business and community leaders ■ Make greater use of task-based Working Groups to take responsibility for implementing specific Actions in the Cultural Plan. ■ Form Working Groups to implement specific Actions in the Cultural Plan. Each Working Group should include one or more representatives from the CSAC but draw on other individuals with interest and relevant expertise in the community. ■ The Cultural Coordinator will support the work of the Working Group by scheduling and facilitating meetings, contributing to discussion, keeping notes and generally ensuring the most efficient use of members' time
2	Assign a stronger strategic leadership role for the Cultural Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase the role of the Cultural Coordinator in supporting Working Groups of the CSAC struck to implement priority Cultural Plan recommendations. ■ Examine the balance of responsibilities in the job of the Cultural Coordinator between responsibility for the GRMP and support to other cultural development opportunities in the region.



Goal 1: Strengthen Collective Leadership		
Objective		Actions
3	Use Service Agreements to support organizational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure compliance with the provision already stated in the current Service Agreement that each facility develop a five-year strategic plan to be tabled with the RDFFG at the outset of each five (5) year funding cycle ■ Provide support and facilitation by the Cultural Coordinator for those sites challenged in developing their strategic plans ■ Require that all sites develop an annual plan that addresses current needs while advancing the goals of the longer-term Strategic Plan. Each site should review the annual plan with the Cultural Coordinator. An alternative could be having annual plans presented at the CSAC. This would provide an opportunity for feedback from peers and to identify potential joint initiatives emerging from each annual plan ■ At the end of each five year service agreement, the Cultural Coordinator (and potentially other RDFFG staff) will meet with staff and board chairs from each of the funded sites to review successes and challenges over the previous five-years and review progress toward the Strategic Plan
4	Tailor performance measures to site resources and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement a “tiered” approach to performance measurement tied to the size and resources of individual sites ■ The first tier (geared toward the smaller sites) could include some if not all the measures submitted each year for the Cultural Reports ■ A second tier could be applicable to sites with a small core of professional staff that could be required to collect additional measures, potentially including both quantitative and qualitative measures ■ The third tier would be the two largest facilities (Exploration Place and Two Rivers Gallery). Here additional measures would be negotiated with each site but could be geared toward data collection that advances organizational goals ■ Establish impact measures to assess how the Cultural Plan as-a-whole benefits the region



Goal 1: Strengthen Collective Leadership

Objective	Actions
5 Launch the Endowment Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Establish clear criteria and funding requirements for accessing the Endowment Fund■ Examine precedents and best practices in other communities to inform development of funding criteria and operation of the Fund■ Adopt a collaborative approach to seeking funds from the Endowment Fund.■ Convene an annual meeting of the eight (8) sites to discuss the funding needs and priorities of all sites■ Identify the site whose funding needs is the most pressing that year and give priority to that site in applying to the Endowment Fund. Over time, annual funding priorities and funding applications will rotate among all sites■ In addition to use by individual sites, the fund should be used to support implementation of key recommendations in the Cultural Plan 2016-2020



Goal 2: Expand Communications and Marketing		
	Objective	Actions
6	Expand local and regional awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Recruit community leaders to act as champions and advocates to expand awareness of the importance of culture and heritage to the community</i> ■ <i>Create a communication plan for the CSAC</i> ■ Ensure that the communications plan/program targets individuals of all ages. Long-term success and viability of all sites depends on a diverse visitor base
7	Leverage social media to expand awareness and increase attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop an overall regional social media strategy that connects the GRMP, RDFFG, Tourism Prince George, the eight (8) sites and other potential partners ■ Consider the value for money proposition of continuing to invest in TV and radio spots in a world where more and more communication is being received online ■ Explore access to RDFFG staff time and expertise to ensure all sites have implemented basic social media tools. Ensure staff and/or volunteers have the knowledge needed to make maximum use of these tools
8	Review the branding and design of the GRMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider undertaking a review of the brand and overall design of the GRMP. While receiving consistent praise from all those consulted, a significant number believed it was timely after several years to undertake such a review of GRMP. The desire for a stronger design was felt to be particularly important in newsletters, magazines, local newspapers and ads and other print materials ■ Several commented that the raven image is a strong one but is interpreted by many visitors as a symbol of First Nations. If visitors arrive at sites expecting significant First Nations culture and heritage they can become disillusioned with that site experience and wary about other sites in the area ■ If the raven is to be maintained there must be a clear story and messaging that places it in a larger context of the history and culture of the region. This is related to the longstanding call for a regional story (below)



Goal 2: Expand Communications and Marketing

Objective		Actions
9	Create cultural tourism packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with tourism agencies to build tourism packages connecting visits to RDFFG sites with other experiences and resources in the region including restaurants/culinary interests, accommodation, other regional cultural activities (e.g. theatre, symphony), natural and cultural heritage features, etc. ■ Secure testimonials from visitors at all sites (via questionnaires) to support marketing to both residents and visitors. Testimonials support the growing attention to experiential tourism and can be used to support traditional print-based channels as well as social media sites such as Trip Advisor
10	Leverage Provincial tourism initiatives to support GRMP in increasing visitation in Fraser-Fort George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investigate and ensure GRMP and the region take maximum advantage of the Barkerville and the Gold Rush Trail, an important provincially recognized initiative. The same applies to Fort St James, a National Historic Site ■ Monitor efforts to have Yellowhead Highway (which will be 100 in 2017) designated as a cultural heritage place ■ Seek opportunities to secure funding from Destination BC who is designating a minimum of 3 communities to work together with funding support from \$25,000-250,000; they are looking for corridors which fits well with the GRMP and the eight sites ■ Investigate the potential for supporting the development of tourism product being developed for Northern British Columbia
11	Develop a regional heritage story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure funding to retain an individual to take a leadership role in the development of the story ■ Draw on secondary sources as well as knowledgeable individuals in the community as source material ■ Establish a Working Group made up of the CSAC to oversee the project (with regular reports to the full CSAC)



Goal 2: Expand Communications and Marketing

Objective		Actions
12	Examine opportunities to enhance current efforts to have visual presence for all sites at community/cultural events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify potential moveable standing display units as a vehicle for profiling all sites and GRMP ■ Assess value-add contribution of display unit over the current banner ■ If a decision is made to proceed ensure strong design and incorporation of the GRMP brand ■ Support cross marketing by making the display available to any site for use during significant programs or events.

Goal 3: Leverage Collaboration and Partnerships

Objective		Actions
13	Convene a First Nations Cultural Roundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Draw on the experience and success of Exploration Place, Two Rivers Gallery and Huble Homestead Historic Site to inform a wider engagement process ■ Invite one or more individuals engaged with the projects/initiatives of the three sites to provide advice and guidance in convening the Roundtable. ■ Following the roundtable, representatives from all RDFFG sites should meet to identify opportunities for responding individually and collectively to interests and needs identified at the Roundtable ■ Invite First Nations participation at the Annual Cultural Summit (see below)
14	Establish a Cultural Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify a software program that will serve as a repository of information and platform for exchange ■ Examine Google Hangout, Google Doc and Google Chat for their suitability ■ Examine a platform called Slack (https://slack.com) that comes with many tie-ins to connect to Dropbox, Google Drive, etc. to an account.



Goal 3: Leverage Collaboration and Partnerships

Objective		Actions
15	Launch a regional storytelling and oral history program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a regional strategy that connects existing programs already being undertaken by many of the funded sites as well as groups such as the Senior's Centre ▪ Assign summer students the task of recording and transcribing interviews ▪ To achieve broad engagement, make use of a simple survey tool such as SurveyMonkey. Contributions should be guided by some overarching question (e.g. what makes your community unique?) to ensure some coherence in responses. ▪ Examine the potential to secure funding from the Canada Council for the Arts funding category <i>Spoken Word, Storytelling and Literary Performance</i> to support organizing a Storytelling Festival. Funding can be used to support professional storyteller to complement local and regional participation.
16	Increase the number of traveling exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (When available) make use of the Endowment Fund to properly resource Two River's Gallery to increase its production of traveling exhibitions (these exhibitions were described as critical to attracting new as well as returning visitors). ▪ Use the Endowment Fund to support Exploration Place in hosting more traveling exhibitions to attract residents and visitors and promote ▪ Failing support from the Endowment Fund, identify other potential sources of support from government (Provincial and Federal) and foundation support
17	Convene an Annual Cultural Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Organize an annual event for people working in the cultural sector across the region to support professional development, to examine potential new region-wide initiatives, and to build professional relationships</i> ▪ <i>Create a list of local experts that people in the region can call on for assistance</i> ▪ Examine opportunities to access faculty resources connected with the University of Northern British Columbia or College of New Caledonia. Use the Summit to identify other professional development needs ▪ Allow time for conversations and exchange among participants ▪ Identify expertise able to strengthen knowledge and understanding related to cultural/recreational tourism



Goal 3: Leverage Collaboration and Partnerships		
Objective		Actions
18	Provide expertise needed for sites to host summer camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach Exploration Place about providing training for summer camps as potentially lucrative program offerings
19	Consider establishing an Attractions Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an Attractions Pass that would connect visits to individual sites with other things to see and do in the region including other cultural organizations or activities, restaurants/culinary experiences, significant cultural or natural heritage features, etc.
20	Implement new festivals ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider organizing fewer but larger festivals with the potential to attract larger numbers of visitors, potentially from outside the region Develop a “signature festival” for the region. The festival theme should be chosen to reflect something that is fundamental to the culture and identity of the region.
21	Organize tours to all sites for summer students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate a bus tour that travels to all sites to familiarize students with the facilities and programs at all sites.

5.4 First Year Priorities

The Objectives and Actions set out above represent an ambitious 5-year agenda. Not all will be implemented but they do stand as a record of needs and opportunities in cultural development in RDFFG in 2015. The CSAC will be charged with identifying priorities as resources and/or opportunities arise.

However, there are a number of “foundational” Objectives and Actions that should be implemented in Year One to create the capacity and resources needed to support the implementation of other facets of the 5-year plan. These priority actions include:

- Reposition responsibilities of the Cultural Coordinator
- Establish terms of reference for the CSAC signaling a strategic leadership role. Consider new members for the CSAC that are respected business and community readers
- Develop criteria and do everything possible to launch the Endowment Fund
- Convene the first Annual Cultural Summit
- Require of all sites the development of a five year Strategic Plan