

“Culture is made to share”

Summary of 13 research interviews on the current impacts and challenges of cultural venues in New Brunswick

Research conducted by Kelly Hill



For the research project partners



Owens Art Gallery
Mount Allison University



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The title quote is from an interview with Nicole Porter, Cultural Coordinator, Fort Folly First Nation.

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This is a “satellite report” of a larger research project into the impacts and challenges of cultural venues in New Brunswick. The project’s Steering Committee includes Julie Whitenect of ArtsLink NB, Anne-Cécile Grunenwald and (formerly) Laurence Dubuc of AAAPNB, Emily Falvey of the Owens Art Gallery, as well as visual artist, curator, and educator Emma Hassencahl-Perley.

The project, which will be completed in the fall of 2024, is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and The Government of New Brunswick.

Key findings

Based on in-depth discussions with senior staff members of 13 cultural venues in New Brunswick, this report examines venues' engagement in their communities and the challenges that they face. It was clear from the interviews that the province's cultural venues are trying to be spaces of reflection, conversation, and lasting impact on people's lives. It was also clear that finances are a significant challenge, especially in the context of limited operating funding.

This summary offers a few examples of the key findings from the interviews. The full report provides many more details.

New Brunswick cultural venues are working hard to develop and sustain mutually beneficial, community-rooted practices. In particular, venues are trying to deepen the relationships between artists and audience members (or workshop participants, in the case of hands-on activities), which can improve everyone's wellbeing.

Venues are strongly influenced by their locations, and they tend to have robust local connections. Still, all are striving to better understand their communities and deepen their connections.

Many examples of community engagement activities were discussed in the interviews, including:

- Teaching students about Indigenous practices such as drumming, blessings, and Powwow activities (Fort Folly First Nation).
- Providing engagement opportunities between visual artists in residence and community members (Struts Gallery, Sackville).
- Ensuring that touring and local artists have meaningful engagements in the community, including in seniors' homes and schools (Imperial Theatre, Saint John).
- Using curatorial choices to further social goals such as human rights and equality (Gallery on Queen, Fredericton).
- Working with many community organizations to further a variety of social and artistic goals (Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen, Moncton).

With much focus on Truth and Reconciliation, there have been increasing levels of connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. For example, many non-Indigenous venues indicated that they are trying to ensure that Indigenous artists are well represented in their programming. As such, these non-Indigenous venues are engaging many Indigenous artists to show works and lead arts learning sessions. Beyond ensuring appropriate Indigenous representation, non-Indigenous organizations are in various places in their journeys to connect with Indigenous Peoples and organizations.

Venues have a central role in supporting the province's artists. Many interviewees spoke of how they promote local and New Brunswick-wide artists and provide them with paid opportunities.

Despite the strengths and efforts noted above, the province's arts, culture, and heritage venues are facing incredible challenges in the current post-pandemic environment. Financial health, the most-discussed interview topic, is a constant, troubling challenge for most venues. Some stated

that culture in New Brunswick is severely under-funded. Operating funding is an urgent need, as many rely on project funding to make ends meet, which hinders long-term stability.

Human resources are a serious concern for nearly all interviewees. Specific challenges include understaffing, the risk of burnout, the financial inability to improve the benefits offered to their staff members, and labour shortages in certain areas. In particular, specialized expertise can be hard to find, especially in rural areas.

Attendance and marketing challenges were pointed out by a number of venues. Some noted that it can be difficult to encourage people to spend money on art and to make arts activities outside the home a regular part of their busy lives. Regarding hands-on activities, some venues indicated that there appears to be a lack of awareness of the usefulness that arts-related learning has for a range of career choices and, more generally, in an increasingly visual and literate world.

Introduction: 13 qualitative interviews

This report provides a summary of key findings from in-person, in-depth qualitative interviews with 13 senior artistic and administrative staff members of cultural venues in New Brunswick. The goals of the interviews were to understand venues' community engagement as well as their current challenges.

More specifically, the report summarizes interview discussions related to:

- Engagement with local residents and all New Brunswickers
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Financial health
- Human resources
- Contributions to New Brunswick's arts, culture, and heritage community
- Other areas of importance in the current environment

Kelly Hill (President of Hill Strategies Research) conducted the 13 interviews in French (4) or English (9). The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and used a semi-structured interview protocol based on the above themes. The interviews were conducted during two visits to the province: 1) a June visit to rural areas, including the Acadian Peninsula, Sackville and area, and St. Andrews; and 2) a November visit to Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton.

Kelly Hill thanks the interviewees for their time and insights. In chronological order, the interviewees were:

- Annie Chiasson, Co-owner, Librairie Pélagie, Shippagan
- Lucie Roy, Head of Events, Centre culturel Caraquet, Caraquet
- Paul Henderson, Director, Struts Gallery, Sackville
- Nicole Porter, Cultural Coordinator, Fort Folly First Nation
- Sierra Reibling, Executive Assistant to the Managing Director, Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre, St. Andrews
- Caroline Walker, Artistic Director and Gerald McEachern, Executive Director, Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre, St. Andrews
- René Légère, Executive Director and Éric Cormier, Deputy Director, Centre culturel Aberdeen, Moncton
- Andrew Keirstead, Executive Director, Saint John Arts Centre, Saint John
- Angela Campbell, Executive Director, Imperial Theatre, Saint John
- Abigail Smith, Co-owner, Haven Music Hall, Saint John
- Chloe Keith-Barnaby, Project Coordinator, Mawi'Art: Wabanaki Artist Collective, Fredericton (Later, we were joined in the discussion by Natasha Martin-Mitchell, Project Manager, and Shawn Dalton, Executive Director.)
- Nadia Khoury, Director and owner, Gallery on Queen, Fredericton
- Nisk Imbeault, Director/Curator, Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen, Moncton (Zoom interview)

The interviews were recorded to enable accurate quotes. In this English report, quotes from Francophone interviewees have been translated by the author.

Broader project on impacts and post-pandemic challenges

This report is part of [a larger project that is investigating the impacts and post-pandemic challenges of the arts, culture, and heritage in New Brunswick](#). Other activities and reports in the project include:

- [A statistical profile of the 2,700 professional artists in New Brunswick in 2021](#).
- [A summary of a survey of 71 cultural venues](#).
- An analysis of other data on the arts and culture in the province.
- A fuller report on the entire project, which is planned for September of 2024.

The research project is intended to produce results that will inform the province's arts, culture, and heritage sector for the next decade. The project's partners will use these resources to further their information sharing, policy, and advocacy activities for the betterment of the sector as a whole.

The project partners are ArtsLink NB, Association acadienne des artistes professionnel.le.s du Nouveau-Brunswick (AAAPNB), and the Owens Art Gallery at Mount Allison University. We want to thank the project's supporters: the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of New Brunswick.

Community engagement

Community engagement by arts organizations can be thought of as activities that “engage constituents and publics in order to align organizational goals, programs, and services with community interests and needs”. (Source: [Animating Democracy](#), from Americans for the Arts) Activities are “designed to build deep relationships between the organization and the communities in which it operates for the purpose of achieving mutual benefit... The arts and community are equal partners.” (Source: [Engaging Matters blog](#)) These descriptions are consistent with the not-for-profit nature of most cultural venues: the main goal of most venues is to create meaning and impact rather than to generate profits.

A survey of N.B. cultural venues, conducted as part of this project, showed that most cultural venues have recently increased their community engagement activities. Further, almost all cultural venues collaborate or are engaged with other groups or businesses in their communities, including schools, organizations serving newcomers, local governments, business groups, and other arts and culture organizations.

The interview findings provide depth to the survey results by showing how venues engage with their communities and how they collaborate with other community-based organizations.

Artistic practices rooted in communities

During the interviews, it was clear that New Brunswick cultural venues are working hard to develop and sustain mutually beneficial, community-rooted practices. All are striving to understand their communities and find the best ways to have an impact.

Some examples from the interviews include:

- Nicole Porter (Cultural Coordinator with **Fort Folly First Nation**) works closely with the local English-language school district, including serving on the district’s Indigenous Advisory Circle. She demonstrates and teaches students about Indigenous practices such as drumming, blessings, and Powwow activities. Fort Folly First Nation also does workshops in association with the Owens Art Gallery and Mount Allison University. Fort Folly First Nation provides a unique service in its community: it offers a regalia library where children can borrow appropriately sized regalia and return them after they grow out of them.
- The **Imperial Theatre** (Saint John) ensures that the professional artists with whom they work have meaningful engagements in the community, including in seniors’ homes and schools. The Theatre also collaborates with cultural organizations and settlement service organizations through the community. These include cultural dancers from Bollywood Dance Studio, dance groups and instructors from the Chinese, Latin, and Hispanic cultural communities, as well as settlement and service organizations such as PRUDE Inc. and The Saint John Newcomers Centre.
- **Struts Gallery** (Sackville) believes that its artist-in-residence programs are more impactful on artists and on the community than simply presenting artists’ works. Why? Because of the opportunities for engagement that are available through residence programs, as well as the exposure to variety of arts practices.

- **Gallery on Queen** (Fredericton) engages people by using the gallery's artistic offerings to further societal goals, such as human rights and equality. The Gallery does this, in part, through the nature of the artwork selected for display and by hosting film events.
- Both the **Saint John Arts Centre** and **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** (St. Andrews) offer many hands-on arts learning opportunities, allowing participants to tap into their creative side, develop new skills, and develop new ways of thinking. Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre noted that participants' mental health can be improved through arts participation. In particular, arts participation can help seniors retain and develop their brains' abilities to change and adapt (i.e., neuroplasticity effects).
- The **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen** (Moncton) works with many community organizations, including Big Brothers Big Sisters as well as the adjoining Musée acadien.
- The **Haven Music Hall** (Saint John), in addition to presenting music acts in its intimate venue, started the Saint John Rock Camp for Girls and Gender Creative Kids, which provides learning opportunities and musical development for women and gender diverse youth (communities that are not well served by existing music development opportunities).

Natasha Martin-Mitchell, Project Manager at **Mawi'Art: Wabanaki Artist Collective** (Fredericton), made a salient point related to community engagement and impacts during our conversation. She pointed out that "the arts saved us during the pandemic, including reading, making art, and even Netflix". She noted that, because art is everywhere, it's easy to undervalue.

"Incredible connection" to local communities

Many interviewees spoke of how their location affects their community connections. A few examples:

- Before the **Centre culturel de Caraquet** was established in 2003, there were few performing arts offerings on the Acadian Peninsula. Lucie Roy (Head of Events) noted that residents love what the organization has to offer from both local and visiting artists. She often hears that people feel lucky that their small town has such good shows available.
- The **Centre culturel Aberdeen** (Moncton) views the city's bilingual environment as an advantage, because this context forces people to ask questions and can produce art that distinct from other places.
- Sackville, home of Mount Allison University, is a university town, and **Struts Gallery** has established many connections with the university. The university's professors and students provide a basis of artists and a level of demand for arts activities. More broadly, Paul Henderson (Director) noted that his knowledge of the community helps develop relationships, allowing the Gallery to connect artists with other resources in town.
- An artist residency program allows the **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** (St. Andrews) to connect with its community. During an artist's residence, there is an open studio most Saturdays and a full exhibition at the end of their residence. Kingsbrae has almost 350 members in a town of about 1,800 people.
- For Annie Chiasson, co-owner of **Librairie Pélagie** (Shippigan and Caraquet), "you have to be close to your community" to run a successful arts organization (in her case, for-profit bookstores). She noted that people on the Acadian Peninsula are very grateful for the store's offerings. "The welcome was incredible" when she and her partner purchased the bookstore in late 2022, with the goal of maintaining and hopefully growing its impact

in the community. She also noted that books touch a lot of people, who in return have become quite attached to the bookstore. "It's an incredible connection."

Goal: Increased engagement

Venues continue to develop relationships and increase their engagement in their communities. Many interviewees spoke of their engagement goals, for example:

- The **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen** wants to reach out to new people and organizations to ensure its community impacts and to build a larger and more diverse audience.
- **Mawi'Art**, as a pan-Atlantic organization, would like to connect with more artists and participants across the Atlantic region, in part by establishing offices and programs in other provinces.
- **Struts Gallery** indicated that it is always trying new forms of outreach and ways to pair artists with community organizations where there might be an affinity.
- The **Imperial Theatre** has developed an innovative membership model, one that is rare in the performing arts world. They have shifted from offering subscriptions to offering paid memberships, which has more than doubled its base and has helped to ensure that members feel part of the organization and connected to its well-known building.
- **Gallery on Queen** wants to extend the reach of its artists beyond the province's borders.

Venues have many connections with other arts, culture, and heritage organizations, and with individual artists

The venue survey found that almost nine out of ten cultural venues collaborate with other cultural organizations. Interviewees described these connections and the development of the cultural community that they are pursuing:

- **Mawi'Art** indicated that the organization's biggest impact might be on artists, for whom it provides paid opportunities to conduct workshops as well as opportunities to show their work in downtown Fredericton. Natasha Martin-Mitchell (Project Manager) noted that "it's all about helping artists, as entrepreneurs, succeed and have an impact". The organization consults with and builds relationships with many Indigenous artists.
- The **Librairie Pélagie** spoke of its promotion of local artists, while the Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen places great importance on the development of curators and curatorial practices.
- **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** has received very positive feedback from artists who have had residencies there. The artists indicated that they loved the experience, the attention given to their work, and the opportunity to focus solely on their art.
- For **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre**, key priorities include supporting emerging artists, Indigenous artists based in New Brunswick, as well as artmakers and other creatives.
- The **Haven Music Hall**, a for-profit organization, is both directly and indirectly involved in the professionalization of artists. In particular, the organization helps teach emerging musicians how to work in the industry as a professional, including interacting with venues

and attendees. Similarly, the for-profit **Gallery on Queen** works closely with emerging artists to help them understand the realities of the visual art world.

- The **Centre culturel Aberdeen** highlighted the fact that its building is a cultural hub in Moncton, one that promotes collaboration and synergy. The Centre provides crucial space for a large number of organizations and events. The Centre culturel Aberdeen also highlighted its significant economic impact for cultural workers. The Centre spends roughly \$300,000 per year on fees to artists and other cultural workers.
- The **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen** has many partnerships with other Moncton-area arts organizations, including the Galerie Sans Nom, Atelier d'estampe Imago, and the Festival international du cinéma francophone en Acadie.

Attendees / audience engagement

A significant part of running a cultural venue involves drawing attendees or participants to activities at the venue. While the venues themselves tend to draw the greatest benefit from audience development, this form of engagement also has broader community impacts. Interviewees offered some examples of their audience engagement activities and the community benefits of these activities:

- Abigail Smith, co-owner of the **Haven Music Hall**, believes that the organization fills a gap in the local market for a small to mid-sized venue. This promotes the overall health of the local music scene by contributing to a “functioning ladder” of venue sizes. There has been positive feedback from attendees about their sense of comfort and safety in attending a show at the Hall, which is something that the Music Hall takes very seriously. Overall, the Hall likes to emphasize the communal aspect of arts attendance: the organization sees itself as a curator of community gatherings.
- Sierra Reibling at the **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** highlighted the importance of bringing the community together through Kingsbrae’s garden and arts programming. In particular, the venue is well used by schools, including children with disabilities.
- The **Imperial Theatre** has been trying to counter the perception that the arts can be elitist by showing and communicating how open and accessible the Theatre is to a wide variety of people. It has a robust “ambassadors” program for newcomers to the theatre, which has helped the organization build relationships with community members, especially immigrants. More generally, the Theatre has started to place more emphasis on the experience of attending the theatre and less on the content of individual shows.
- The workshop series from **Mawi’Art** included 43 workshops that drew 444 participants, about three-quarters of whom are Indigenous. Chloe Keith-Barnaby noted that the workshop series was open to all and represents the largest public facing endeavour in the organization’s history. The organization received very positive feedback from the workshops, including one participant who noted how great a workshop was for the community it provided. Another participant indicated that they learned many skills that they can apply to their everyday life.
- **Gallery on Queen** aims to provide a safe, quiet space. Nadia Khoury noted that the gallery can be a hub, a social space, and a gathering spot. Sometimes, people even visit the gallery for its therapeutic benefits.
- The **Librairie Pélagie** noted that books touch people of all ages and help create intergenerational connections. People become attached to “their” bookstore.

Some interviewees noted that they have specific attendance challenges:

- **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** has perceived a decrease in interest from high school students in some hands-on arts activities. There appears to be a lack of awareness regarding careers in the arts, the connections of the arts to other careers (such as design), as well as the usefulness that arts-related learning has in an increasingly visual and literate world.
- The **Haven Music Hall** has a marketing challenge in trying to become a regular part of people’s schedules, and it is sometimes difficult to encourage people to spend money on art.

- For the **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen**, its location outside of the city centre on the university campus is a bit isolated. Overcoming this visibility challenge is an ongoing process.
- During the pandemic, the **Librarie Pélagie** (under its previous owners) had to close its store in Bathurst, which reflects the fragility of many types of cultural venues.

Truth and Reconciliation

In the survey of venues conducted for this project, about one-quarter of respondents said that they have produced and/or presented works focused on Truth and Reconciliation in the past year. More respondents considered the advancement of Truth and Reconciliation an area of concern than an area of strength.

No venues are more engaged in or affected by Truth and Reconciliation than Indigenous organizations, two of which were included in the interviews. Both Nicole Porter (Cultural Coordinator, **Fort Folly First Nation**) and Chloe Keith-Barnaby (Project Coordinator, **Mawi'Art**) said that they have noticed an increase in interest in Indigenous cultural experiences from non-Indigenous people. As Chloe noted, "people are more keen on attending [Indigenous arts activities], learning, and listening". In this context, many non-Indigenous organizations are looking for Indigenous artists to show works and lead workshop sessions. As just one example from the interviews, Lucie Roy (**Centre culturel de Caraquet**) mentioned that the Centre presented an Indigenous SLAM poet, who told the story of her people through her poetry. This appeared to have a profound impact on the people in attendance.

The cultural programs of **Fort Folly First Nation** are receiving significant interest from non-Indigenous people who are eager to learn about the culture, including First Nations song, drum making, medicines, and the land. The First Nation's cultural programming promotes traditional ecological knowledge. Ironically, it can sometimes be tougher to draw participants from within the community.

Mawi'Art has observed an interesting conundrum for some Indigenous organizations: they need to be cognizant of guidelines laid out by non-Indigenous partners and funding organizations, but they also need to maintain cultural integrity by behaving like the culture in which they work. Shawn Dalton (Executive Director) noted that "we are leaders". As such, Mawi'Art continues to attempt to improve the situations of the organizations and individuals that it serves.

Many non-Indigenous venues indicated that they work to ensure that Indigenous artists are represented in their programming. Beyond ensuring Indigenous representation on stages, walls, and screens, non-Indigenous organizations are in various places in their journeys to connect with Indigenous Peoples and organizations:

- The **Imperial Theatre** has transitioned away from thinking that the organization is equitable just because it includes Indigenous artists in its programming. The organization is working to educate its own staff, Board, and volunteers about reconciliation, information that it is working into its thinking about equitable spaces. For Angela Campbell (Executive Director), it is the "responsibility of an arts organization to lead that conversation and create that space".
- **Struts Gallery** wants to be prepared to engage with local Indigenous communities "in the right way", which involves working to learn about them and building solid relationships. As noted by Paul Henderson (Director), "it takes real and sustained commitment of time and resources to develop working relationships with Indigenous communities". Time and financial resources are two things that are often in short supply in cultural organizations.

- **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** indicated that Truth and Reconciliation is a profound part of its thinking, including exhibition planning. Like the Imperial Theatre, the organization is trying to lead this dialogue in its community.
- Nadia Khoury, Director and owner of **Gallery on Queen**, has always prioritized Indigenous works and attempted to nurture relationships with First Nations artists. Nadia noted that this has to be done sensitively, without any perception that she is taking advantage of the artist or of the work.
- The demand for Indigenous programming has led to a shortage of Indigenous curators, as noted by Nisk Imbeault, Director/Curator at the **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen**. The gallery works with Indigenous artists and has Indigenous programming but recognizes that it still has much work to do to ensure equitable representation and engagement.

Financial health: Operating funding needed

For most cultural venues, finances are a constant, troubling challenge. Financial health (and challenges) was the most-discussed topic during the interviews. Interviewees noted that:

- “In general, the arts are undervalued in this province.”
- “There is chronic under-funding.”
- Funding for many venues is “project grants based”.

A few venues interviewed for this project believe that their financial situation is OK: they have kept a tight lid on expenses, where possible, and are working to grow their revenues, or are at least keeping them stable. However, even for these organizations, the margin between financial success and failure is thin. Even for them, finances are the biggest challenge, and they are seeking new sources of funding and partnerships.

Operating funding is a clear need for many organizations:

- **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** summarized its biggest need in two words: “core funding”. The Centre relies almost exclusively on project funding to make up its budget of \$350,000 to \$400,000.
- Andrew Keirstead (Executive Director of the **Saint John Arts Centre**) noted that the Centre relies heavily on “a patchwork” of project funding and that adequate and sustainable operating funding is sorely needed. Andrew explained that, in theory, nine regional arts centres (including both Sunbury Shores and Saint John) could be eligible to receive up to \$30,000 in funding from the provincial government. However, only two of the nine centres receive this level of funding, despite budgets in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- For the **Centre culturel Aberdeen**, securing their operating budget is challenge #1. The Centre has seen a precipitous increase in costs, and government funding is very difficult to obtain, especially now that pandemic-related funding is no longer available. René Légère (Executive Director) worries that some organizations will have to close, given the “crisis” that he sees in the arts community.

A related funding challenge involves the difficulty of raising money for ongoing programming, rather than new activities. When project funding is available, many funders want to contribute to something new, or at least an expansion of activities, which unfortunately ignores issues of long-term stability.

An example from the visual arts was provided by the **Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen**, who indicated that is difficult to find money for the core work of art collection and protection.

A performing arts example was offered by the **Imperial Theatre**, which is finding it harder to obtain funding for curriculum relevant, socially relevant shows for school children. This is, in part, because these activities are not new for the organization, and sustainable funding has never been available. This challenge is made more acute by the lack of money available from the Department of Education for arts experiences. In this context, the Imperial Theatre is trying to build a small endowment for the long-term financial security of its school shows.

The **Imperial Theatre** also noted that it can be challenging to get beyond a “transactional” relationship with many attendees, e.g., turning buyers of show tickets into long-term donors.

Andrew Keirstead (**Saint John Arts Centre**) wondered if there is a perception challenge among Anglophone residents, in that the arts are often not seen as a worthwhile cause and a valid career path. He believes that, in general, the arts and culture are better respected and valued by Francophone residents. He wondered whether aspects of the Francophone experience could be helpful to communications work about the meaning and value of the arts and culture in English-language settings.

Human resources

Human resources are a pressing concern for nearly all interviewees. Specific challenges include understaffing, staff shortages in certain areas, the risk of burnout, and an inability to improve the benefits offered to their staff members. Andrew Keirstead, Executive Director of the **Saint John Arts Centre**, succinctly outlined the situation of many organizations: "Staffing is always an issue."

In general, the interview findings tend to reinforce the results of the survey of cultural venues: New Brunswick cultural venues tend to be small; staff capacity is a common concern; venues struggle to offer competitive salaries and benefits; and, in most venues, staff members do extra unpaid work.

In terms of staff support, Annie Chiasson (co-owner of **Librairie Pélagie**) and Lucie Roy (Head of Events at the **Centre culturel de Caraquet**) expressed their gratitude for the mental health support program (Bouée) that was available via the AAAPNB. Unfortunately, that program is no longer offered due to a lack of funding. This type of support is welcome and needed in the cultural community.

Mawi'Art: Wabanaki Artist Collective is working to build its staff capacity and pointed to this as a key issue for the organization.

Nicole Porter, Cultural Coordinator at **Fort Folly First Nation**, shared that she is a department of one person, although she has received help from a summer student.

Regarding staff shortages, Paul Henderson noted that both time and resources are limited at **Struts Gallery**. This was seconded by representatives of the **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre**, who spoke of the organization's capacity challenges. In fact, the Artistic Director at Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre has a job that is officially part time, but she works full time hours.

Both organizations are established in rural communities, and **Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre** indicated that it has a significant challenge in finding qualified arts instructors. In fact, the challenge is so acute that, when asked what the organization might do with a cash infusion, representatives of the Centre said that they would try to find and hire more instructors for the organization's programs. They view the organization as an economic driver, and such an infusion would aid the local economy.

The **Centre culturel Aberdeen** pointed to HR shortages and risk of burnout. The organization runs with just four full-time staff members, plus contract workers. Two areas of specific concern are a shortage of technicians and the lack of financial ability to hire a full-time communications staff member. Similarly, the **Haven Music Hall** pointed to a shortage of music technicians and would also like to be able to hire people to assist with booking and grant-writing.

Other staffing challenges were also mentioned. For example, **Librairie Pélagie**, located in a rural area, finds it challenging to hire people who have experience in the book industry. That being said, Annie Chiasson is very pleased with the organizations' current staff members but would like to have higher sales volume, which would allow the store to increase staff wages.

Similarly, the **Saint John Arts Centre** noted that it does not have the financial ability to cover staff health benefits or retirement plans.

Like Annie Chiasson of Librairie Pélagie, Lucie Roy (Head of Events at the **Centre culturel Caraquet**), expressed gratitude for the staff members that the organization currently has. She noted that people who work in the centre are looking for small-town life and are happy to work in an arts organization in a small town setting. Lucie expressed an interest in having salary benchmarks for different positions, customized for rural areas. Such a product would ideally include sample job descriptions and lists of tasks.

Situated in St. Andrews, which is experiencing a severe housing shortage, the **Kingsbrae International Residence for the Arts & Amphitheatre** knows that it is tough for many staff members to find a place to live. To help counter this, Kingsbrae bought a former 10-unit hotel and a 3-unit house to convert into staff housing. Even with these options, Sierra Riebling noted that the organization could use double that number of spots to help house its staff.

Other insights from the interviews

The wide-ranging discussions uncovered other opportunities, impacts, and challenges in the province's cultural venues.

Regarding **facilities**, interviewees mentioned challenges such as insufficient storage space, freezing pipes, faulty roofs and windows, outdated HVAC systems, and inadequate (or absent) fire suppression systems. It is tough to find adequate funding for these needs, and some interviewees pointed out specific facilities upgrades that they would undertake if their venue received an infusion of cash (e.g., storage spaces, building facades, studio spaces, kitchen facilities).

In terms of the **environment**, some interviewees spoke of promoting eco-consciousness through their programming and reducing their organizations' environmental footprints.

Many venues are working to increase **diversity** and improve **accessibility**, such as through an equity and inclusion plan that can help make their sites, their programming, and the art works that they offer more accessible in both physical and other ways. Others have had their staff and board members receive training in equity, diversity, and inclusion.