

## **The Development of the Edmonton Arts Council – A Case Study**

### **Connecting communities through the arts**

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#### **Purpose of presentation**

Typically, a presentation on connecting communities through the arts illustrates how artists favourably, or perhaps unfavourably, impact on their community. This paper, while not the opposite, is a less direct story. The purpose here is to describe a process, a history, where a community created an organization with a practical purpose of supporting artists and the process of art in that community while, at the same time, consciously serving the entire community by strengthening the connection(s) between the artists and the community.

The creation of the Edmonton Arts Council (EAC) was a long and, at times, annoyingly slow process but, in retrospect, that slow pace was ideal and resulted in a stronger, sturdier organization with amazingly solid support from all parts of the community. The development of the EAC was not directed or controlled by a rigid pre-conceived policy or model. It was ultimately a community-led process of planning and improvisation. That process required not only that artists and specific parts of their artistic community work together but also that the arts community connect and work effectively with the overall community.

#### **Prologue**

It is an understatement to say that the arts and festivals are vitally important to the community of Edmonton. Edmonton has long defined itself as a home for artists and the city has seen remarkable artistic achievements in its close to 100 years of existence. The reasons for this are many and open to much discussion and speculation. Edmonton's inclination to value and support artists has been credited to a variety of factors including the relative geographical isolation of the city; the presence of a large, arts-oriented university with strong fine arts departments; a favourably diverse mixture of ethnic groups resident in the city; the charisma and leadership of key individuals at critical points in the city's history, even the weather. The fact remains that Edmontonians support local arts and festival events in droves.

One indication of the level of this support lies in an economic perspective as was shown in a 1996 study by Economic Development Edmonton that the economic impact on Edmonton of the locally based non-profit arts and festival organizations is \$75.2 million annually. Those organizations annually generate \$52.4 million in wages and salaries resulting in the equivalent of 2,087 person years of employment. This degree of economic activity can only be the consequence of a large number of organizations producing a large number of shows or events for a large number of people. As a comparison, in the same year (1996-97) one of Edmonton's other famous organizations,

the Edmonton Oilers, had an economic impact on the community of \$62.9 million including \$39 million in wages and salaries resulting in 1,039 person years of employment. That was a year when the Oilers were able to complete two rounds of the Stanley Cup playoffs before being eliminated and thus it is reasonable to assume that the economic activity generated annually by Edmonton's non-profit arts and festival organizations is equivalent to that generated by the Edmonton Oilers in a year when they win the Stanley Cup. A notable difference, of course, is that the Oilers do not always win the Stanley Cup while the arts and festivals score hat-tricks 365 days a year each year!

In 1980, the Province of Alberta celebrated its 75th anniversary. The province was wealthy with oil and gas revenue and the government led by Peter Lougheed decided to mark the anniversary with an extraordinary expenditure of \$75 million. These funds were dispersed throughout the province and in Edmonton were used, in part, to support and augment a general summer festival suitably called *Summerfest*. That umbrella festival included a number of small self-contained arts festivals including a folk, jazz and theatre festival. The success of *Summerfest* was remarkable and at the end of summer there was a general resolve to keep it all going. In 1981 the City allocated \$600,000 towards festival support and Edmonton started firmly on the path to becoming Canada's Festival City. The results have been spectacular. Edmonton is now home to twelve major festivals including North America's original and largest Fringe Theatre Festival, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, The Works Visual Arts Festival, Jazz City International Music Festival, Edmonton International Street Performers Festival, Symphony Under the Sky Festival, River City Shakespeare Festival, Local Heroes Film Festival, Edmonton Heritage Days Festival, Edmonton Klondike Days Festival, Edmonton First Night Festival and Edmonton Celebrate Canada Festival. In addition, Edmonton is home to a number of smaller festivals. The festival grant budget in 2000 was \$862,000.

The effect of the 75th anniversary largess was also felt by Edmonton's arts organizations and a similar growth was seen in this sector. In 1980, the City of Edmonton supported 18 arts organizations; by 1986 that number had grown to 43 and the budget had grown from \$264,000 (cash) to \$428,758 (\$298,489 cash and \$130,269 in subsidy on leases). In 1980 the five large "flagship" arts organizations (Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Citadel Theatre, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton Opera and Alberta Ballet Company) were well established so most, if not all, of this growth came in the area of smaller professional organizations. Six years later the City was supporting 11 professional theatres, 5 professional musical ensembles, 3 professional dance ensembles, a visual artists co-op and a number of amateur organizations. In 2000, the City supported 17 dance organizations, 29 music organizations, 5 literary arts organizations, 9 visual arts organizations, 2 media arts organizations, and 16 theatre organizations. The arts grant budget in 2000 was \$752,000.

An economic downturn in the mid-80s and general concern about government deficits had an effect of dampening the City's enthusiasm for directly supporting the arts through grants. No cuts were made to the grant programs but, from 1988 to 1997 no increases were made either. The City's annual operating Grants-in-Aid to arts organizations were determined by the 9 member Parks and Recreation Culture Advisory Board (PRCAB).

PRCAB also determined grants to sport, recreation and multi-cultural organizations. An Administrative Committee within the City's Department of Parks and Recreation determined festival grants. The members of PRCAB – all volunteers drawn from the community at large – had limited expertise in the arts which meant some of them had difficulty in comprehending the complexity and pressures inherent in the production of professional arts events. This understandably caused some friction between the professional arts organizations and PRCAB.

But everything was not bleak. The City Administration continued to develop arts policy reports and recommendations throughout the 1980s and, from 1985 to 1991 there was a senior staff person devoted to arts and culture (Director of Culture) within the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. The most important policy report was *Edmonton: A City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century • Report of the Cultural Futures Project* completed in December 1988. But even this report was only partially adopted and, when in 1991 the Director of Culture, Donna Cardinal, left for personal reasons, her vacant position was left unfilled. This sent a clear message that the arts were no longer a priority for the City. Momentum was lost and artists began leaving Edmonton.

### **Development of the Edmonton Arts Council**

#### **Act 1 • Mayor's Task Force (1992-1995)**

The process leading to the formation of the Edmonton Arts Council started during the 1992 civic election. A report prepared by the Edmonton Professional Arts Council (EPAC), made 11 specific recommendations that would, in their opinion, improve the City's support of the arts and outlined a number of issues that were hindering the development of a healthy arts community in Edmonton. Those issues revolved primarily around funding (amount and process) but also around policy and communication. The EPAC document urged the politicians to create an independent arts council to address the issues.

By 1992, EPAC had been in existence for 7 years and was well established with a membership of close to 25 professional arts and festival organizations including all of the major organizations. The primary mandate of EPAC was political advocacy on behalf of professional arts organizations and the organization had a reputation for being aggressive and well informed.

The dissatisfaction with the existing system under PRCAB stemmed from the wide grant mandate of PRCAB (sport, recreation, multi-cultural, arts) with resultant "watering down" of expertise and experience on the Board; the inter-sector disputes between sport, recreation arts and multicultural groups over their fair share of the grant pot; the influence of external political pressures, and the reactive rather than proactive nature of PRCAB particularly in the area of policy. Although in theory PRCAB was also an advisory Board to City Council, in practice City Council did not ask PRCAB for advice on arts policy or issues.

The specific issues cited by EPAC during the 1992 civic election were:

- a need for arts funding from the City to be separated from funding for sport, recreation and multi-cultural organizations;
- a need for increased funding to the arts organizations;
- a need for grant decisions to be made by peer juries, that is by persons who had expertise in the area; and
- a need for a proactive organization to deal with the development of arts policy.

As a solution to these problems, EPAC called for the formation of an Edmonton Arts Foundation which was described as "an independent, arms-length arts funding organization with the two-fold mandate of determining grant allocations and engaging in municipal arts policy development."

In 1992, the incumbent Mayor Jan Reimer was seeking a second three-year term. She had a well earned reputation for being arts friendly. While she did not promise to enact the EPAC recommendations, she did agree that, if re-elected, she would create a Task Force to make recommendations on ways to improve the City's relationship to the arts in general.

Mayor Reimer was returned to office and, after the election, there was a one-year delay while her office developed terms of reference and committee composition for the Task Force. In the opinion of the Mayor, the committee needed to have a cross section of the community including representatives not only from the professional arts but also from the festivals, amateur arts, business community, individual artists, and City Hall. This was an expansion of the original focus of the EPAC recommendations and caused some anxiety among EPAC members that the study would either return vague, impotent results or aggravate divisions within the arts and festival communities.

These anxieties aside, the Mayor's Task Force on Investment in the Arts was created and began work in the Fall of 1993. It had 13 members including:

- Chair Denise Roy • Chair of Arts Administration program at Grant MacEwan Community College
- Susan Abells • Executive Director of Alberta Craft Council
- Vinod Bhardwaj • Edmonton Folk Arts Council – a heritage artist organization
- Sharon Budnarchuk • past member of PRCAB and owner of Audrey's Bookstore
- Patricia Cook • Alberta Choral Federation – a service organization for mainly amateur artists
- Rachel Corbett • current member of PRCAB with a background in sports and recreation
- Dick Finkel • Producer of the Edmonton Street Performer Festival
- Frank Glenfield • a long-time community volunteer and supporter of Edmonton professional theatre
- Ron Holland • representative from Economic Development Edmonton (EDE)
- Richard Mantle • Executive Director of Edmonton Opera
- Esther Ondrack • Vice President of Chieftain International, Inc. a large oil and gas corporation
- Judy Padua • Executive Director of the Clifford E. Lee Foundation

- Councillor Michael Phair • Edmonton City Council
- Carol Watson • seconded from City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation
- Jill Wright • representing the Mayor

The Task Force was supported administratively by staff seconded from the City's Department of Parks and Recreation.

In retrospect, it is evident that the time taken to develop this committee was important for a number of reasons. It was important that the committee as a whole have the background, expertise and passion required to undertake the task but also the ability to grasp the wider point of view and understand the pragmatic nature of municipal politics. Mayor Reimer, who had a background in social services and was portrayed in the press as "anti-business", did not in general enjoy the support of a significant number of City Councillors. This made her vulnerable to opposition even if the issue was seemingly small and, in this case, the issue was wider than originally defined in the EPAC paper. It was anticipated that the debate around the initiative would raise the questions of what are the core services or obligations of civic government and what is the need for public support for the arts. Ultimately the key question would be about the fundamental nature of the relationship (or social contract) between artists and their community.

The Task Force was officially charged with developing strategies for the support, growth and awareness of the arts in Edmonton. More specifically, its objectives were to:

- Review existing research related to the role of the arts in Edmonton's community and economy;
- Examine the role of all levels of government in relation to the arts;
- Recommend funding strategies to develop the arts in Edmonton;
- Evaluate different models for funding and promoting the arts; and
- Address specific policy issues identified in previous studies on the arts in Edmonton.

One year later, in October 1994, the study was completed and a report was sent to the Mayor. That report documented the process followed by the Task Force which included extensive stakeholder consultation (often on a one-on-one basis) throughout the process, public consultation at key points during the process, research into other municipalities and internal debate. Five recommendations were made:

- 1 That City Council approve the formation of an autonomous arts council to be known as The Edmonton Arts Council;
- 2 That a comprehensive strategy for promoting the arts be developed;
- 3 That the City of Edmonton recognize the impact of the arts on the economy, quality of life and identity of our city, and, in conjunction with the arts community, develop an arts policy which reflects this recognition of value;
- 4 That the direct municipal investment in the arts be established at a level which reflects the significant social and economic contribution which the arts make to Edmonton;
- 5 That uniform policies for in-kind support of arts groups and festivals be established and that such policies be applied by all City departments on a consistent basis.

The 4-fold mandate of the proposed arts council was described as:

- To receive and allocate municipal funds to arts groups and festivals;
- To advise Council on arts-related matters;
- To work with businesses, foundations and local authorities to broaden the funding base for the arts;
- To increase public awareness of the role of the arts in Edmonton

The justification of the recommended formation of the Edmonton Arts Council was summarized, in part, in three points:

- 1 Unlike PRCAB, this Council will be a single agency serving the entire arts community, from professional and amateur organizations to festivals;
- 2 This Council will have strong links with City Council, Economic Development Edmonton and the Edmonton business community
- 3 By working in close partnership with the municipality, businesses, foundations and other agencies, the Council can work to ensure the ongoing viability of the arts in Edmonton.

The Task Force report was supported by the arts community, by PRCAB, by EDE, and by the City Administration. There was, however, a cautious initial response from the Community Services Committee of Edmonton City Council when they received the recommendations in October 1994. The report was sent back to the Department of Parks and Recreation for more information about the cost implications.

At this point, the report started to receive media attention and not all of the attention was positive. There were concerns about the administrative cost of the proposed Arts Council and fears raised that those costs would come out of the grants budget. Another concern was the issue of whether the Arts Council would ever become financially self-sufficient or if it would continue to require City funds for its operations.

The Task Force report returned to Community Services Committee six weeks later and only the first recommendation (creation of an arts council) was considered. The other four recommendations were tabled. The report was not passed but was again sent back to City Administration for an "implementation strategy".

An Implementation Team was created and was chaired by the City Manager's office. The Team was comprised of 8 persons from Parks and Recreations, EPAC, EDE and the original Task Force.

In March 1995, the Implementation Strategy report was sent back to Community Services Committee. At that meeting the report was supported by City Administration as well as by speakers from an impressive cross section of the community-at-large including individual citizens, artists, and the business community.

The report was finally passed on to City Council for their debate and potential approval in April 1995. That debate was intense and the report lost (7 votes against and 6 votes for) on a number of motions for acceptance. Finally, a portion of the report was rescued

and one amended recommendation (the implementation of the Edmonton Arts Council for a one-year pilot project) was passed. The vote was 7 votes in favour and 6 votes opposed. There is some suspicion even today that the one vote that changed from a no to a yes was the result of one of the Councillors falling asleep during the debate, waking suddenly when the vote was called and pressing the wrong button.

The motion specified that the action plan for the one-year pilot focus on the value-added activities made possible by an Arts Council.

### **Act 2 - The Steering Committee Pilot Year (1995-1996)**

The one-year pilot was guided by a Steering Committee appointed by the City. The members of that committee were:

- Terry MacDougall – President of IPS Consulting (engineer) and long time community volunteer and former Chair of PRCAB
- Councillor Michael Phair – Edmonton City Council
- Denise Roy – Chair of Arts Administration program at Grant MacEwan Community College
- Darka Tarnowsky – President – Bottom Line Productions (publicity and marketing) and a representative of Ukrainian Shumka Dancers
- Mary Arnold – Arnold Consulting Group Inc. financial planning, strategic planning
- Miki Andrejevic – Executive Director of Writer’s Guild of Alberta
- Esther Ondrack – Vice-President of Chieftain International Inc. (oil and gas) and long time community volunteer
- Denny Thomas – Partner in Milner Fenerty law firm and long time community volunteer
- Gordon Gilroy – President of Vision Graphics and Board Member EDE
- Dave Williams – Special Projects Coordinator Economic Development Edmonton – formerly assistant General Manager of the Edmonton Eskimos Football Club
- Marc Vasey – Founder and Producer of Jazz City International Music Festival
- Ben Henderson – Artistic Director of Theatre Network
- Ben Kashani – Senior Financial Officer with the City of Edmonton
- Maria David-Evans – General Manager of City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation

In addition, Josh Keller was hired as Executive Director. Mr. Keller had an excellent background for this position – he had been assistant General Manager at the Citadel Theatre, a successful festival producer with Edmonton's First Night Festival, and a consultant and independent producer in the Edmonton community for a number of years. Carol Watson continued as a seconded staff persons from the Department of Parks and Recreation and Daisy Kaiser was hired by Mr. Keller as support staff during the Pilot Year.

The key activities undertaken by the Steering Committee during the pilot year were:

- Revising the City's grant policy C211-C. This was undertaken in the same spirit of the Mayor's Task Force and involved extensive community consultation.
- Developing the Board structure of the new Edmonton Arts Council. It was important that the EAC have adequate representation from all sectors of the community while

maintaining a sense of priority for the point of view of artists and arts organizations. It was decided that the EAC Board would have 15 elected members: 5 representing different types of arts and festival organizations (large, medium, small, festivals, amateur or community) and 10 members-at-large with at least 4 of those being practicing artists. In addition, there would be 3 appointed members one from City Administration, City Council, and EDE.

- Developing the membership structure of the new Edmonton Arts Council. It was decided that there would be both full and associate memberships. Associate or non-voting memberships were open to any person in the community who was not a practicing artist but who both supported the EAC and wanted to participate in the activities of the EAC. Full members were further divided into organizational members (large, medium, small) or individual artists.
- Positioning the EAC within the community and beginning a series of strategic alliances based on shared concerns or projects. Partnerships were formed with other funders most notably the Edmonton Community Foundation, educational institutions, EDE, Greater Edmonton Visitors and Convention Association later Edmonton Tourism, Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, the sport and recreation community. These partnerships gave the EAC a profile and a voice in a number of arenas including downtown revitalization and promotion of the city as well as important contacts for future projects.
- Continuing to build trust and confidence with all sectors of the arts and festival communities. The EAC Executive Director met regularly with EPAC keeping them informed about all developments. In addition, he met with many of the city's individual artists. As well, the EAC undertook a large Arts Awareness Campaign in the first half of the trial year. This campaign served notice to the city and to the arts community that the EAC intended to foster a new spirit of appreciation and bridge building between the arts and the larger community.

The Steering Committee's revised statement of the mandate of the EAC reflected the direction that it intended to head. The revised mandate was expressed in five tenets:

- 1 To increase the profile, recognition, and the awareness of the arts as a vital component of our economy and community.
- 2 To increase the investment base for the arts through joint ventures, initiatives and partnerships with the business community and all levels of government.
- 3 To develop recommendations to City Council regarding the future of municipal funding for the arts
- 4 To facilitate and provide services for Edmonton's arts and cultural community.
- 5 To establish a long term business plan and a fully defined structure for the Edmonton Arts Council in consultation with the Edmonton arts community

As was the case with the Mayor's Task Force, some people expressed the belief that the progress towards a fully established EAC was slower than ideal. But, hindsight once again reveals that the one-year trial period under the guidance of the Steering Committee had immeasurable benefit in allowing the fledgling organization an opportunity to develop roots and the resulting deep understanding of the community it was intended to

serve. The trial year also gave the community an opportunity to get to know the EAC and to develop a sense of commitment to the new organization. It was, in many ways, a type of extended courtship and honeymoon that provided the basis for the future relationship.

In May 1996, at the end of the trial year, a report was submitted to City Council. That report outlined the work completed during the past year and recommended three points:

- 1 That a funding and services agreement be negotiated with the City to put the EAC on a permanent footing, initially for a six-year period;
- 2 That, on a phased-in basis, the EAC take on the function of allocating municipal arts grants currently administered by the Parks and Recreation Cultural Advisory Board for arts groups and the Administrative Grants-in-Aid Advisory Committee for festivals; and
- 3 That the EAC explore, in conjunction with the city budget office, the possibility of increasing municipal funding levels, with the goal of reaching a per-capita investment of \$5 by the year 2000.

The report was submitted to a significantly different City Council. A new City Council (new Mayor and 6 new Councillors) had been elected the previous October and much of the suspicion and indeed opposition seemed to have left with the old Council. After debate, the report's recommendations were passed by a comfortable majority of Councillors. There were some amendments that changed the services agreement from a six-year period to a three-year period and added a clause that required the EAC to report on what options it had explored to broaden its base of funding at the end of the three years. The City agreed to fund the EAC at \$165,000 per year for the duration of the three-year services agreement which stretched officially from January 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999.

The services agreement identified the services to be provided to the City by the EAC to be as follows:

- Allocate annual arts and festival Grants
- Advise City Council, at Council's request, on the validity of emergency funding requests outside of the normal grant process received by Council from arts and festival organizations.
- Provide informed and timely advice regarding the City's budget for annual grants to arts and festivals. This service shall include participation in the City's annual budgeting process.
- Provide expert advice, upon request, to all parts of the City regarding any issues which impact on the health and vitality of Edmonton's arts and festival sectors.
- Assist and support arts and festivals organizations in obtaining support from sources other than the City,
- Assist the arts and festival sectors in initiating and implementing special projects that assure that a healthy infrastructure exists to benefit Edmonton's arts and festival communities. Examples include a community ticket outlet and artist housing in downtown Edmonton.

- Promote greater awareness in Edmonton and elsewhere of the high quality of work being produced in Edmonton
- Act as a resource to those staff in the City providing support to recreational arts at the neighbourhood and community level
- Assist the City and its economic development agencies in attracting and retaining industries including cultural industries
- Maintain an up-to-date arts and festivals database.

The Pilot Year officially came to an end in June 1996 and there was a "stub" year from July to December 1996. The City provided operating funds for that period. City staff that had been seconded for the pilot year went back to the City and two new EAC staff members were hired. That brought the EAC staff to three full time positions: an executive director Josh Keller, an office manager and communications director Peni Christopher, and a grants and program officer John Mahon.

### **Act Three • the Edmonton Arts Council Year One**

Once the EAC was established in the new services agreement with the City, the first task was two-fold: to seek members and elect the first Board of Directors. A membership drive started in late 1996 and by the organizational meeting in December 1996 there were 165 members. There was a strong interest in the first Board election and 28 candidates were nominated to fill the 15 Board positions.

The first elected Board of the EAC included:

- Paul Moulton – Editor of Culture Shock arts monthly and later Facility Manager of the Winspear Centre for Music
- Heidi Bunting – individual artist (dance) and dance instructor at Grant MacEwan Community College
- Ben Henderson – Artistic Director of Theatre Network and medium organization representative on the Board
- Donna Lemieux – Development Officer for the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and large organization representative on the Board
- Peter Field – individual artist (visual arts)
- Donna Cardinal – an independent arts consultant and scholar and Director of Culture for the City of Edmonton 1985-1991.
- Susanna Biro – Csardas Hungarian Dancers and community organization representative on the Board
- Darka Tarnowsky – President of Bottom Line Productions (publicity and marketing)
- Denny Thomas – Partner with Milner Fenerty law firm and long time community volunteer
- Esther Ondrack – Vice-President of Chieftain International Inc. and long time community volunteer
- Ava Karvonen – individual artist (film)
- Debra Yee – National Screen Institute and festival organization representative on the Board
- Meiko Ouchi – individual artist (film) and small organization representative on the Board.

- Pat Darbasie – individual artist (theatre)
- Alice Major – individual artist (poet)
- Councillor Leroy Chahley – Edmonton City Council (appointed)
- Vi Becker – EDE (appointed)
- Maria David-Evans – General Manager of City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation (appointed)

The first year of the EAC under the services agreement with the City of Edmonton saw some significant progress. The revised policy C211-C concerning criteria and eligibility for City of Edmonton arts and festival operating grants was passed. The first round of grants were successfully completed in partnership with Parks and Recreation, grant funding increased dramatically by over \$100,000 in the 1998 City budget. TIX on the Square – a community box office – was established, a second arts awareness campaign took place, and a major project intended to integrate multicultural or heritage artists into the EAC began. The heritage artist project was undertaken with the assistance of a contract from the federal government (Department of Canadian Heritage).

#### **Act Four • Subsequent Years and the Future**

The EAC is now in its fourth year of operations. At the end of 1999, a second three-year services agreement was negotiated with the City of Edmonton with increased responsibilities for the EAC. Interestingly, City Council agreed to the renewal of the services agreement unanimously and without debate. Membership in the EAC is over 250 and a strong Board structure has been established.

The Board has restated the EAC's mandate once again and it is now expressed as follows: The Edmonton Arts Council exists to support and promote the arts community in Edmonton. The EAC meets the needs of its members and the arts community as a whole through activities that:

- Help provide financial support to festivals, arts organizations and individual artists.
- Educate those who play a role in the success of the arts community about the quality of artistic work produced here, its importance to the city, and its needs.
- Advise decision makers on specific issues that affect the arts.
- Nurture the quality of artistic work produced here.

Some other highlights of the past three years include:

- ArtsHab – the EAC successfully created ArtsHab which has brought artist live/work studios into downtown Edmonton.
- Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund – the EATF is a new fund that provides "operating grants" to individual artists while they live and work in Edmonton. The project is a joint undertaking of the EAC and the Edmonton Community Foundation and, to date, nine grants have been awarded with another six scheduled to be awarded this September.
- In the area of policy and advocacy, the EAC has been instrumental in a new City policy whereby non-profit organizations renting, leasing or owning City property are eligible for both tax and lease/rent forgiveness.

- The EAC was honoured by Economic Development Edmonton for its participation in two EDE promotional tours to central Canada.
- Global Culture and Arts Communities Symposium – took place in October 1999 in partnership with the University of Alberta. The symposium theme was the survival of the relevance of local arts communities in the global entertainment marketplace.
- City Grants – grant funding has continued to be increased each year by the City and, with the second EAC/City of Edmonton services agreement, a new project grant program was created.

### **The Epilogue • Reasons for success**

This presentation claimed to describe a process whereby a community created a organization that supported the artists and the process of art in that community while strengthening the connections between the artists and the community. It is fair, I believe, to say that the Edmonton Arts Council meets those criteria and in closing, it is important to discuss some of the factors that led to that success.

In my opinion, some of those factors are:

- The tempo was right. There was enough momentum to keep the process interesting while, at the same time, not losing any voices. The slow but steady development allowed time at each important point for reflection, discussion and resolution. As has been noted several times already in this paper, the pace of development was often externally dictated and it can be partially attributed to good luck.
- Some committed, experience people stayed with the process from start to finish. There are several excellent examples of this. Terry McDougall who was Chair of the Steering Committee during the Pilot Year had also been Chair of PRCAB and was instrumental in developing the 1988 policy study, *Edmonton: A City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century • Report of the Cultural Futures Project*. Denise Roy chaired the Mayor's Task Force and was a member of the Steering Committee during the Pilot Year.
- Some key community leaders – business, arts and political – supported the process at opportune times.
- The process was unpretentious and open to all. This has been described as an "Edmonton characteristic".
- There was some key political support especially from Mayor Reimer and Councillor Michael Phair during the Mayor's Task Force and Pilot Year. In the first and second years of the EAC's tenure under the first services agreement, Councillor Leroy Chahley provided excellent and committed support. This was especially appreciated by the arts community as Councillor Chahley had been one of the Councillors who initially did not support the formation of the EAC.
- Some major positive events took place in the arts and festival communities during the process. An example was the building and opening of the Francis Winspear Centre for Music.
- The powers within the arts community were respectful of each other and, in terms of political power, were relatively balanced. This may also be described as an Edmonton characteristic where the major festivals balance the presence and power of the flagship arts organizations. In addition, Edmonton has a well established amateur arts community with several large organizations, e.g., Walterdale Theatre,

Cosmopolitan Music Society; and, Edmonton's community of small to medium sized professional arts organizations is both large and diverse.

- Finally, there was some luck, e.g., the change of members on City Council mid-way through the Pilot Year was fortuitous for the EAC and it can be argued that the economic turnaround in Alberta in the mid 1990s helped as well.

### **Challenges and the future**

The future holds many challenges and opportunities for the Edmonton Arts Council. Within the premise of this presentation, the major challenges that could threaten to distance the EAC from the community include:

- The challenge of keeping the main constituent organizations (flagships, festivals, smaller professionals and amateurs) working together. The arts are, at a certain level, a very competitive business. It is important, therefore, to not let the short term need to attract audiences and funding overshadow the long-term reality that the cultural community works as a matrix and is completely interdependent.
- The challenge to integrate that part of the cultural community that has been traditionally labeled "non-arts". This is most apparent in the festival community where the EAC supports a number of cultural and heritage theme festivals. They too are part of the matrix but are often nervous of being considered to be less "worthy" in the arts arena when compared to "fine-arts" festivals.
- The challenge of adequately understanding and supporting the role and needs of individual artists in the community. Arts organizations have louder more organized voices and it is too easy to overlook the individual artists who stand at the very core of the community.
- The challenge of supporting and understanding the role of local artists and arts communities in the international entertainment marketplace.
- The challenge of avoiding expedient political compromises which harm the artistic process while remaining a trusted partner in the entire community. This challenge becomes more acute for the EAC as it moves closer to the business and political decision makers.
- Finally, there will always be a tendency by outside decision-makers (politicians) to view an arts council as the primary voice in expressing the concerns and needs of the arts community. It is important that a successful arts council does not inadvertently cut off direct communication between the artists, arts organizations and the rest of the community.

**Publications** (on file at the Edmonton Arts Council office)

- Edmonton: A City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century • Report of the Cultural Futures Project (1988)
- A Direction for the Professional Arts in Edmonton • A Municipal Policy Initiative of the Edmonton Professional Arts Council (1992)
- Building Creative Capital • An Investment Plan for the Arts in Edmonton Report of the Mayor's Task Force on Investment in the Arts (October 1994)
- Mayor's Task Force on Investment in the Arts • Implementation Committee Report (April 1995)
- Edmonton Arts Council Pilot Year Report (May 1996)
- Services Agreement Between the Edmonton Arts Council Society and the City of Edmonton (January 1997 revised and renewed January 2000)
- Edmonton Arts Council annual reports 1997, 1998, 1999