



# Building Cultural Vitality

Arts-Based Projects

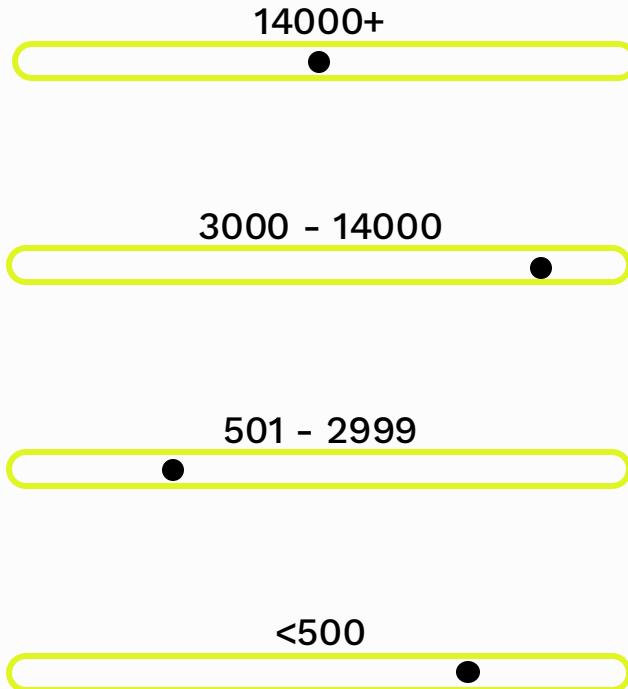
(Large and Small)

for Municipalities



Cultural vitality is defined as **“evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities.”**

# What's the population of your municipality?



# Would you classify your municipality as:

- 1) Ready to start our first arts-based engagement project
- 2) Wanting to build on our pre-existing arts and culture work
- 3) Looking for big swings and bold new ideas

# Cultural Vitality

## Rural vs Urban Arts

### Why?

### Examples

### How?

# What does **art** look like in your community?

What arts and cultural activities are already taking place in your community?

Music

Visual Arts/Craft

Writing

Theatre

Dance

Digital Arts

# Rural Art

Rural art can serve many functions.

**Imported vs Local Stories**

**Art for Us vs Art for Them**



# WHY?

Arts initiatives can serve the community in these broad ways:

**Community Engagement**  
(youth, seniors, general public)

**Identity-Building**  
(festivals and events that reinforce stories and traditions, public art that showcases stories and values)

**Attracting People**  
(putting communities on the map for tourists and new residents)

# HOW?

Let's talk about some concrete examples of initiatives that can help boost cultural vitality in your communities.



## Val Marie, Sask

Population 140

In August 1994, Val Marie hosted Grasslands — Where Heaven Meets Earth, a multidisciplinary arts experience that drew upon the experiences and materials provided by local residents. This community-wide event is an example of how one event can bring together outsiders and locals, as well as cross-discipline performers and stimulate an revival of aesthetic and community awareness.



## Annapolis Royal, NS

Population 530

With more than 135 heritage buildings—including Canada's oldest wood-frame de Gannes-Cosby House (1708)—the town's built history coexists with vibrant contemporary arts. A key cultural catalyst is ARTsPLACE, the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council, hosting exhibitions, workshops, and public events that foster local creativity. Its signature *Paint the Town* festival (running for 30 years) energizes the waterfront with plein-air painting and community dialogue about arts in small regions.

The town also supports music, theatre, and public performance through venues like King's Theatre and the new Oqwa'titek amphitheatre to host concerts, plays, and buskers alongside heritage boat-building programs.

Deeply rooted cultural programming includes the candlelight graveyard tours, Acadian Heritage Experience, and Fort Anne's heritage tapestry. These cultural assets knit tourism, volunteerism, economic vitality, and civic pride together.



## Elora, ON

Population 3,800

Elora is known as a historic village and artisan centre, with a strong tourism base. The Elora Festival is widely known. The town has been called a “heritage shopping village” with such a successful focus on heritage and artisan shopping centres that it tended to destroy the authentic in favour of the tourist-friendly version of an artist’s community (Mitchell & Coghill, 2000).

Elora’s strengths lie in the conversion of major historical buildings into modern tourist amenities, without sacrificing their historical qualities, as well as the promotion of its arts, music, and literary festivals.



## Chemainus, BC

Population 4,300

The Chemainus mural project is the world's leading community-driven **art tourism experience**. Spurred to save a community from certain economic collapse, the Chemainus mural project has delighted and inspired millions of visitors and ultimately became the blueprint for **community mural projects globally**.

In 1994, the film, *The Little Town That Did* was created. This film by Executive Producer Karl Schutz, produced by Charles Wilkinson and Cal Shumiatcher of Petra Film Productions with special assistance from the National Film Board of Canada, tells the story of a town that would not die, of a community strong and determined.



## Prince Edward County, ON

Population 25,704  
Picton, ON - pop 4,700

Once primarily an agricultural region, Prince Edward County has transformed into a vibrant cultural destination by investing in galleries, studios, festivals, and heritage preservation. The area's natural beauty, combined with its support for artists, has attracted a creative community and spurred growth in tourism, hospitality, and local business.

A self-guided tour, the PEC Arts Trail connects art collectors, buyers and lovers with professional creators and curators in unique single-artist studios and contemporary, multi-artist galleries throughout The County and attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year.

Events such as the PEC Jazz Festival showcase the region's commitment to cultural development.



## Nelson, BC

Population 10,000

Nelson has earned a reputation as the #1 small arts town in Canada. Businesses throughout the city display art year-round in support of local artists, and the summer months feature a special festival to partner arts and business owners to turn local shops into galleries. Each month during the summer there is a show opening open to the public, with food, drinks, and live music. Other activities and attractions include local and imported performances at the local theatre, as well as at smaller venues in bars and restaurants. Artwalk rotates the work of 65-70 artists though 17 restaurants and shops, with a walking tour through downtown Nelson that draws thousands each year. The area around Nelson is also known for cultural activity. The annual Kaslo Jazz Festival is nearby, and the Shambhala rave in nearby Salmo River attracts 10,000 people each summer.



Photo: Town of Gander Public Art Collection, Installation view. Learn more [here](#).



Photo: Pat Byrne

## Get Out Of Town Concert Series

“The Lawnya Vawnya ‘Get Out of Town’ (GOT) concert series began in 2019 and presents LV shows across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the year. We focus on showcasing emerging performers outside of the capital city in more rural areas of the province.

Past GOT performances have taken place in Port Rexton, Clarke’s Beach, Corner Brook, Steady Brook, St. Anthony, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and more.”

**Kelly McMichael & John Moran**  
April 4, 2024  
The Lawrence O’Brien Centre  
Happy Valley Goose Bay

[lawnyavawnya.com](http://lawnyavawnya.com)



Photo: St. Michael's Printshop

## St. Michael's Printshop Mobile Press

“The Mobile Press initiative brings printmaking directly to people where they live and gather, creating accessible art experiences throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Our traveling press fosters community connections and creative participation through interactive workshops and demonstrations at local events across St. John's and the province.”

### Recent events include:

- Bonavista Biennale x SMP Mobile Press Artist in Residence
- Pop-Up Printing at the St John's Farmer's Market Book Fair
- Earth Day Market at Manuels River
- **Hike and Plein Air Printmaking Workshop** in the Tablelands in Gros Morne National Park

[stmichaelsprintshop.com](http://stmichaelsprintshop.com)



Monotype in the Mantel: printmaking workshop participants using the mobile press in Gros Morne National Park. Photo: SMP.. Learn more [here](#).



Photo: The Town of Chapel Arm

## The Town Of Chapel Arm Artist Residency

Through Municipalities NL and Business & Arts NL's "Our Creative Home" initiative, Chapel Arm was able to offer an artist residency program, featuring two artists who worked with residents of all ages in a series of workshops offering visual art and creative writing activities.

[municipalnl.ca](http://municipalnl.ca)



Matthew Le Drew leading a writing workshop as artist in residency at the Town of Chapel Arm. Learn more [here](#).



Artwork by Seaglass B&B and Studio, member of The Artisan Trail. Learn more about the Artisan Trail NL [here](#).

# Public Art

Public Art has the power to draw people together, to reflect our evolving culture, and to attract visitors.

There are lots of creative ways to incorporate art into public spaces that can build community or help put your town on the map.



**Mural: Pulse of the Community by Charlie Johnston, Dr Hugh Tomey Health Centre, Botwood**



Crow Gulch Mural by Jordan Bennett and Marcus Gosse. Learn more [here](#).



The Heart Garden by Edmund Saunders Sculpture (Labradorite stone) Learn more [here](#).



Giant Squid by Don Foulds Sculpture (Concrete and steel) Learn more [here](#).



Born in the North, Provider, 2023, mural. Installation view, 2023 Bonavista Biennale: Host. Photo: Brian Ricks. Learn more [here](#).



Manifesting Rainbows by Nina Elliott Installation (Fibre art) [Learn more here](#).



Anti-Racism Mural by Brian Amadi mural. Learn more [here](#).



Photo: Clean St. John's

## Municipal Painted Traffic Box Program

Each year, the creative work of local artists shines on traffic control boxes found at intersections throughout St. John's. The boxes provide unique outdoor canvases for artists and brighten up otherwise plain corners of our City.

Clean St. John's provides honorariums and exposure to local artists through business and individual sponsorships as well as program support from the City of St. John's. In addition to building on the colorful character St. John's is known for, the artwork has also been successful in reducing unwanted graffiti on the traffic boxes.

[cleanstjohns.ca](http://cleanstjohns.ca)



Photo: Paul Daly

## Art Car *Art on the Move*

Business & Arts NL partnered with Genesis St. John's to commission the Genesis GV80 Art Car – a beautiful and whimsical piece of public art, brought to life by local artist Vanessa Iddon.

Additional Reading:

[Spotlight on Genesis GV80 Art Car Artist  
Vanessa Iddon](#)



2025 Art Car by Katie Hardy

# Anchor Events

An anchor cultural event can build community pride and engagement, boost tourism, and bring resources into the local arts and culture community.

Or consider amplifying the cultural component of your annual event(s).

## Bonavista Biennale

Bonavista Peninsula, NL  
[bonavistabiennale.com](http://bonavistabiennale.com)

## Writers at Woody Point

Woody Point, NL  
[writersatwoodypoint.com](http://writersatwoodypoint.com)

## Winterset in Summer

Eastport, NL  
[wintersetinsummer.ca](http://wintersetinsummer.ca)

## Unscripted Twillingate

Twillingate, NL  
[unscriptedfestival.com](http://unscriptedfestival.com)



**&** Audience gathered at Sandy Cove Beach to watch artist Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde, performance. Photo: Brian Ricks. Learn more [here](#).



Audience gathered outside of the iconic Woody Point Heritage Theatre during intermission. Photo: Writers at Woody Point. Learn more [here](#).



Scott B. Henderson, Katherena Vermette, and Drew Hayden Taylor in conversation for the 2023 festival. Photo: Winterset in Summer. Learn more [here](#).



Former Canada's Drag Race contestant Irma Gerd performing at the Twillingate Drag Show. Photo: Unscripted Twillingate. Learn more [here](#).

# We Can Help

Part of Business & Arts NL's mandate includes fostering relationships between the creative sector and partners in the public and private sectors.

We're here to help!

## Brokering Services

[businessandartsnl.com/services](http://businessandartsnl.com/services)

## Quidi Vidi Art Search

[businessandartsnl.com/qvas](http://businessandartsnl.com/qvas)

## Our Creative Home

[municipalnl.ca/our-creative-home](http://municipalnl.ca/our-creative-home)

## Explore Art NL

[businessandartsnl.com/explore-art-nl](http://businessandartsnl.com/explore-art-nl)

# Step 1?

Not sure where to start? If reaching out to make connections to artists and creators in your community seems like a useful step, we're here to suggest a process to help make it as easy as possible.

## Spotlighting Artists in Your Municipality

### Step-by-step guide with templates.



How to engage artists in your community  
Content and language suggestions

Please email [info@businessandartsnl.com](mailto:info@businessandartsnl.com) to request a copy



Quidi Vidi Art Search map. Learn more [here](#).



Altogether Knotty by Robert Hengeveld at the Quidi Vidi Village Artisan Studios Sculpture (Epoxy painted steel). Learn more [here](#).



Iceberg in a Bottle by Vessela Brakalova at the Quidi Vidi Brewery, Sculpture (Perforated aluminum and Iceberg beer bottles). Learn more [here](#).



Mural: Through Line by Kyle Bennett for the Town of Englee. Learn more [here](#).

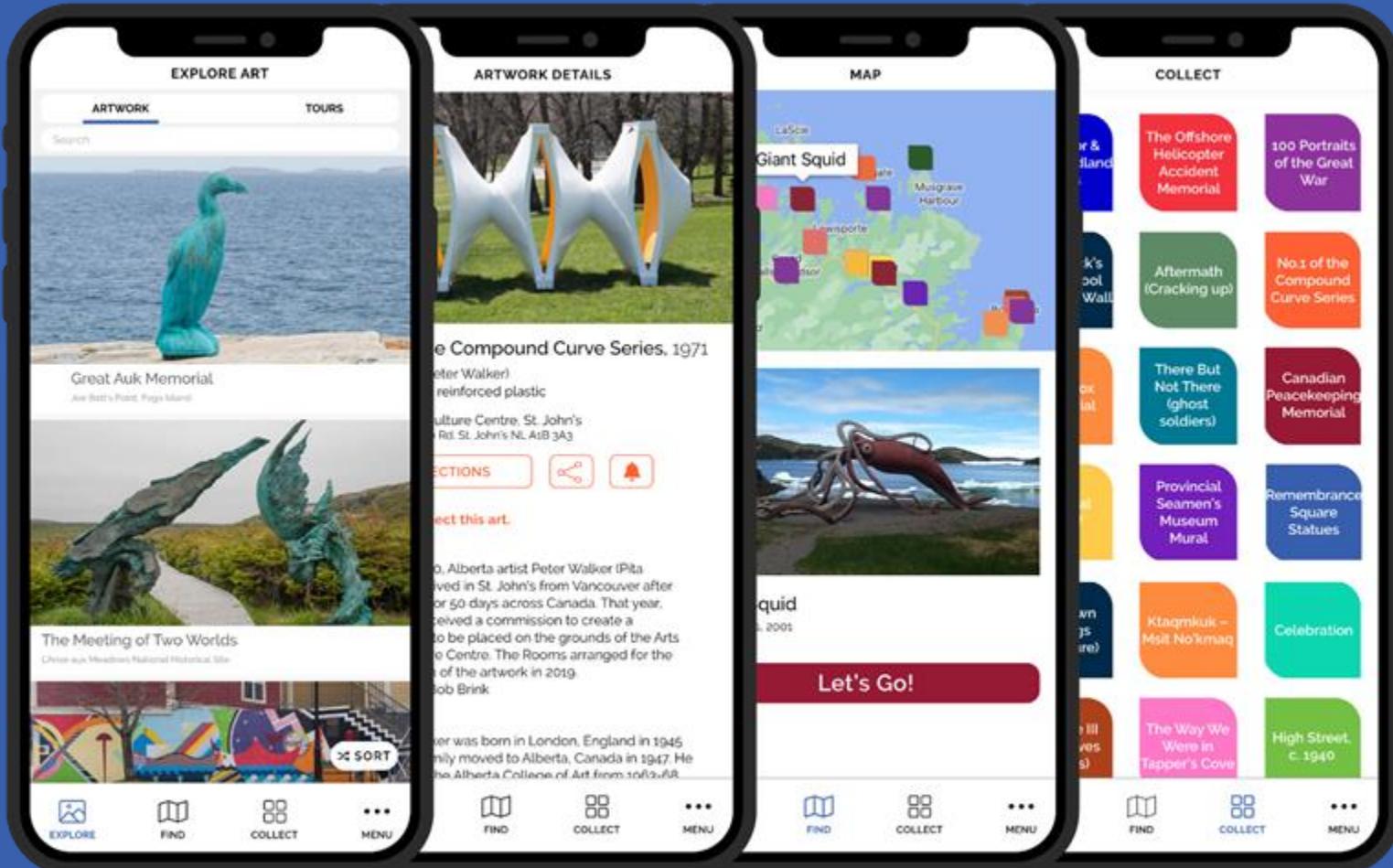


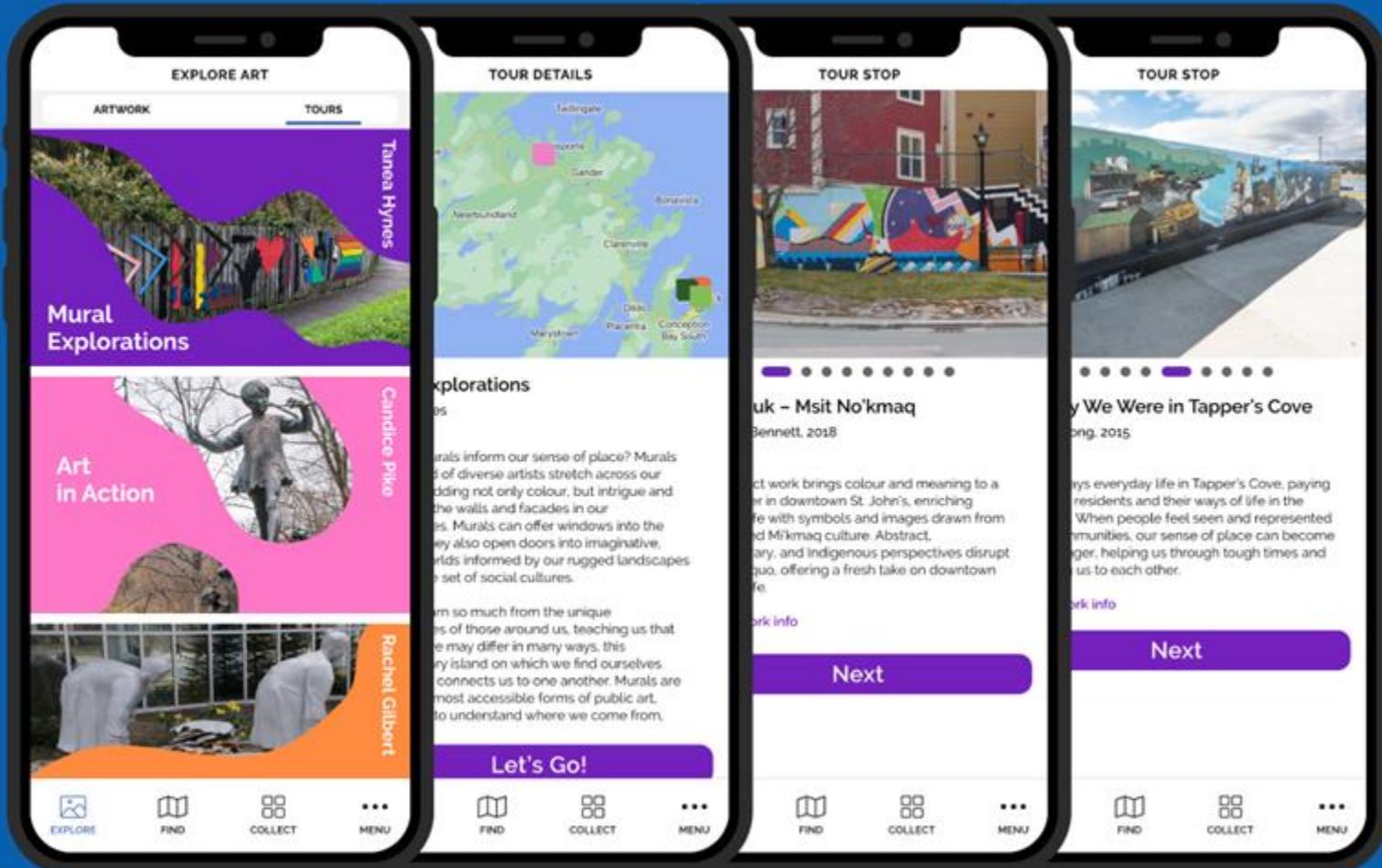
Monika "Dee Jay" Rumbolt working on their mural for the Town of Cartwright. Learn more [here](#).





Students at Botwood Elementary working on their mural as a part of Tiffany Lyver artist in residence. Learn more [here](#).





# Become a Member

If you believe that a vibrant creative community contributes to a resilient economy, and embraces arts and culture as part of what makes Newfoundland and Labrador attractive and unique, join our cohort of members, who include arts organizations and businesses big and small, from across the province.

## Why Join?

- Foster a Creative Community
- Exclusive Access to Events
- Expand Your Network
- Collaborative Support
- Enhance Your Municipality's Identity
- Give Back to Your Community
- Engage Your Residents

[businessandartsnl.com/join-us](http://businessandartsnl.com/join-us)