

A Look at Leisure

MAY 1988

No. 23

ARTS AND CULTURE

The area of arts and culture is taking on greater importance in the recreation community. This bulletin looks at participation in arts and cultural activities and discusses current issues associated with the provision of these types of leisure opportunities.



INTRODUCTION

Many Albertans participate in arts and cultural activities during their leisure time. Interest in these types of leisure activities is increasing. This is evident from attendance at arts performances and events as well as greater recreational participation. It is predicted that interest and participation in the various art forms will accelerate in the next 10 to 20 years (5).

Traditionally, parks and recreation departments have focused on sports, physical activities, and outdoor pursuits. Recreation professionals are now directing more attention toward programming for leisure activities in the area of arts and culture.

In the mid 1980s, the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association adopted policies on "Recreation and the Arts". In their policy statement, the Canadian Parks /Recreation Association identified "the need for the recreation profession to take a leadership role in dealing with the challenges and opportunities of this rapidly expanding area of leisure activity" (5).

Although culture and the arts may be defined in many ways, this bulletin will use the definition provided in the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association policy statement. This statement defines arts as the "visual, performing and literary arts, crafts, heritage arts, recreational arts and environmental arts" (5).

All levels of government have roles related to the area of arts and culture. In Alberta, Alberta Culture is the provincial government department primarily responsible for arts and cultural services.. Alberta Recreation and Parks plays a key role through the provision of Community Recreation/Cultural Grants to municipalities and volunteer community organizations. Since the mid 1980s, there has been increasing emphasis on the role of municipalities in providing these types of leisure opportunities at the local level.

This bulletin presents information about participation in cultural leisure activities and identifies some of the community benefits associated with these activities. The bulletin also addresses some important issues for culture programming in the 1980s and 1990s. These include: the role of municipalities in the provision of cultural services; and the role of community arts councils.

Note: References are identified by a number on the last page of the bulletin.



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Some of the highlights which are discussed in the bulletin are:

- Important reasons for participating in arts and culture activities are relaxation, being creative, learning new skills, and using skills and talents.
- Important considerations for municipalities involved in the area of arts programming are funding, policy development, awareness of artists' needs, and providing support for community groups.
- At present, there are about 20 to 30 community arts councils operating in Alberta.

BENEFITS OF ARTS AND CULTURE

The arts play an important role *in* the leisure life styles of Canadians. There are many personal and community benefits associated with involvement in these types of leisure activities. Some of these benefits are creative and social. Other benefits are economic (6).

- Art and cultural opportunities contribute to an unproved quality of life. They can enhance the attractiveness of a community and contribute to community image.
- These types of leisure activities can be educational and provide a broad and varied entertainment base. In small communities, in particular, they can provide social cohesion and a sense of community spirit. Cram (7) suggests that: "Smaller centres may have much less available in the arts but the arts are probably a more integral part of the total fabric of community life than in larger centres".
- On the economic side, there are employment benefits. The availability of cultural opportunities in the larger centres may influence industry relocation decisions. In addition, there is potential for increased tourism. Fairs, festivals, and special events have an important function in attracting tourist dollars into communities.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES

What is known about participation in arts and cultural activities? Several major Canadian studies were completed in the 1970s, but current information about Albertans' participation in these types of leisure activities is limited.

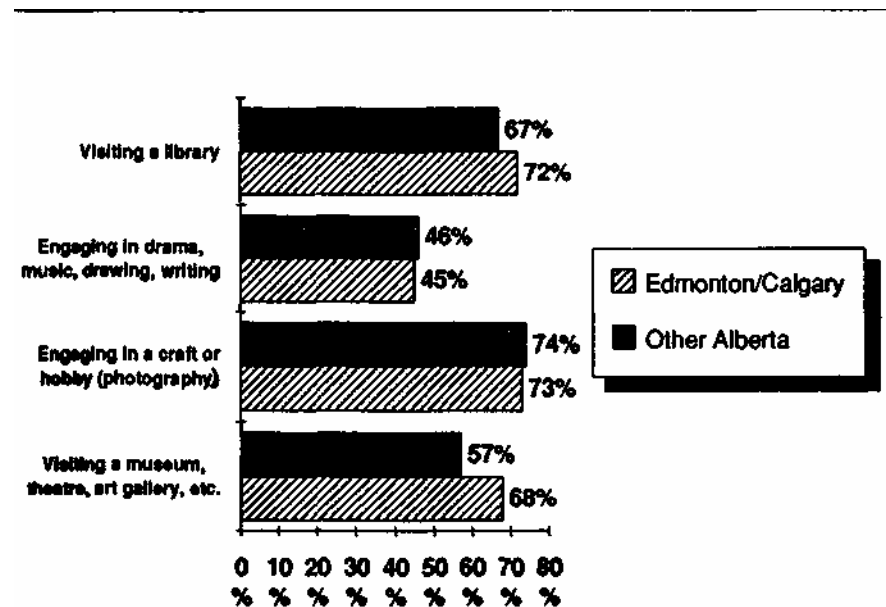
The 1984 *Public Opinion Survey on Recreation* examined participation in a small number of cultural leisure activities. The results are summarized in Figure 1. This figure shows the percentages of Edmonton/Calgary households and the percentages of households in smaller communities participating *in* each type of activity.



For most of these activities, participation rates are the same for the large urban centres and the rest of Alberta. Visiting a museum, live theatre, or art gallery was more prevalent for Edmonton/Calgary residents than for those living in other areas of the province. This pattern likely reflects the greater availability of these facilities in the urban centres.

A leisure study completed in Edmonton in the early 1980s provides information about participation in a broader range of cultural leisure activities (8). Table 1 shows the percentage of people over 13 years of age participating in each activity during the previous year.

Figure 1
Participation in Cultural Leisure Activities



The Performing Arts Touring programme of Alberta Culture has shown a marked increase in participation over the past 10 years. In this programme, non-profit organizations are subsidized when they sponsor a series of community performances. In 1985/86, 182 community organizations presented a total of 1728 performances, the majority of which were by Alberta artists (3). Figure 2 shows the increase in numbers of persons attending the performance series in Alberta communities from 1977/78 to 1985/86.

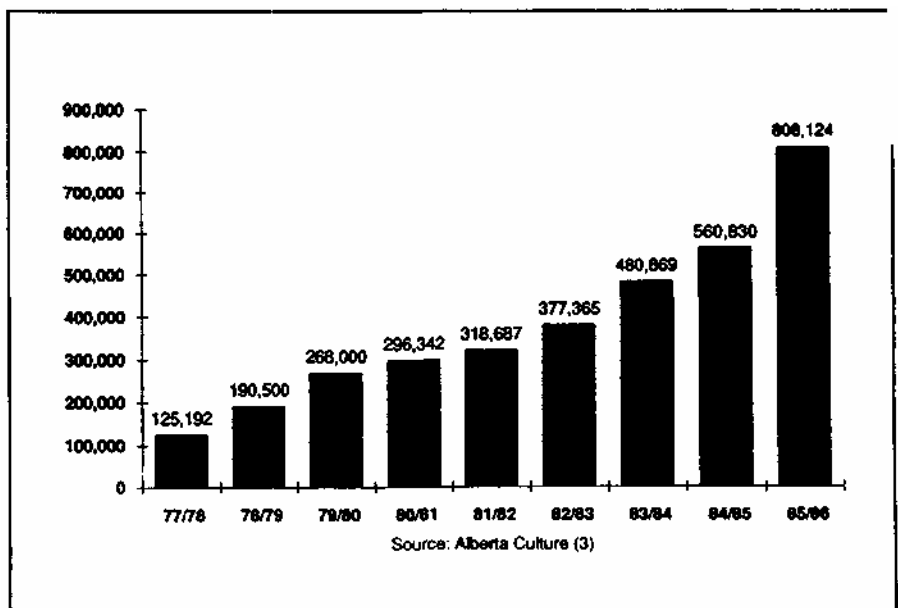


Table 1: Participation in Arts and Cultural Activities: Edmonton

Activity	Percent of Respondents
Needlecraft	31%
Photography	28%
Music (playing or singing)	26%
Drawing, sketching	16%
Dance	11%
Painting/sculpture	11%
Ceramics/pottery	10%
Attendance at a cultural festival	38%
Attendance at a popular music concert	38%
Attendance at a live theatre	33%
Attendance at a classical music performance or opera	19%

Other indicators of participation levels come from individual organizations in the arts community. The Alberta Crafts Council, for example, has 3,550 members. This council is an umbrella organiza-

Figure 2
Number of Persons Attending Community Series Performances in Alberta



tion for all types of crafts, such as pottery, weaving, fibre arts, and silversmithing. Of these 3,550 members, 550 are individuals, while 3,000 represent organization or commercial memberships.

HERITAGE ARTS

Heritage arts is also a significant aspect of Alberta's cultural life. Heritage arts is an art form which expresses a cultural tradition or heritage (2). A study by Alberta Culture and the Folk Arts Council (2) found that about 35% to 40% of ethnocultural organizations were engaged in performing arts activities. There were 481 dance, music, and theatre groups, involving over 7,000 artists and 4,800 support personnel. The study estimated that at least 400,000 Albertans view a heritage performance annually. When attendance at heritage festivals is included, at least 1 million people enjoy heritage performances in a year.

Another important aspect of heritage is the preservation and restoration of historic buildings. Renovating these buildings may provide ideal facilities for cultural services.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The relatively high number of participating households identified in the 1984 *Public Opinion Survey on Recreation* indicates that some cultural activities have a very broad appeal.

Many studies have examined the characteristics of performing arts audiences. These studies have shown that those who attend performing arts events are mainly urban, and have relatively high levels of education and income. Women make up a large part of the performing arts audience.

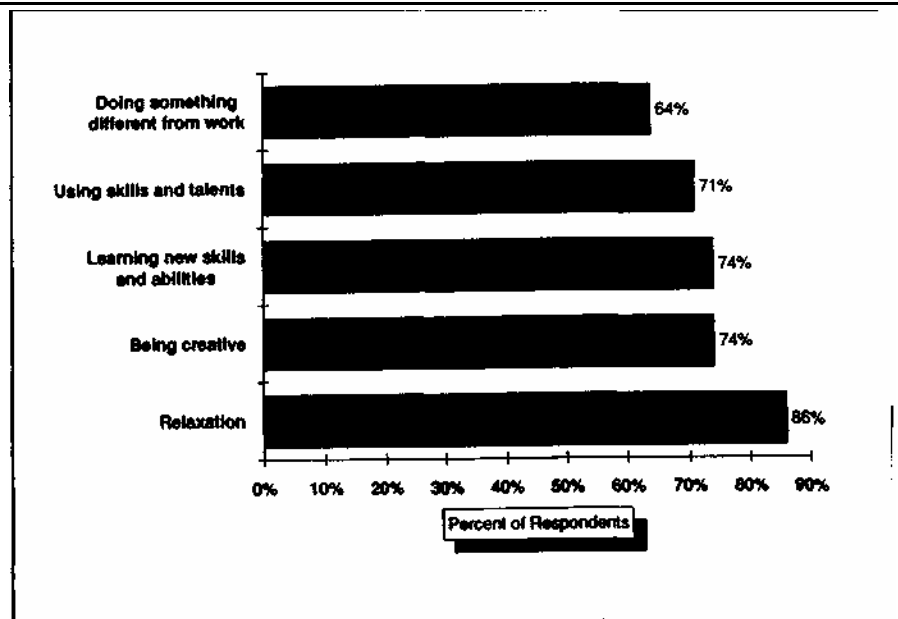
Socio-demographic characteristics of the arts audience do vary, however, from community to community and according to the type of arts activity (10,11). McGaughey's (10) survey of arts audience studies provides a good overview of the characteristics of audiences for various types of performing arts.

Women have a high level of involvement in craft activities. This is particularly true for those involved in crafts as a hobby or on a part-time basis. It is interesting to note, however, that there is a proportionally higher representation of men working as full-time artisans (1).

Why do people participate in these types of leisure activities? The results of the 1984 *Public Opinion Survey on Recreation* show that relaxation is the most important reason (see Figure 3). Being creative, learning new skills, and using skills and talents, are important reasons for approximately three-quarters of the participants.



Figure 3
Reasons for Participation



Although these five reasons are important for participation in most types of leisure activities, they appear to be particularly important to participants in cultural pursuits. Three other reasons which are especially important to arts and culture participants are: showing others they can do it; helping others; and contributing to the community.

Participants in heritage arts activities are motivated by the desire to preserve their heritage and to educate others about their culture. Involvement in heritage performing arts activities also serves as a recreational or social activity. This is especially true for residents of smaller communities (2).

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been directed to the role of municipalities in the provision of arts and cultural opportunities. The policy statement of the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association states that the municipal authority is best suited to assess accurately the total cultural needs of the community: "Of all levels of government, municipalities have the most immediate effect on the development of the arts at the local level and can provide citizens with a wide range of opportunities to enjoy and participate in cultural activities" (5).

The Canadian Parks/Recreation Association also identifies that "municipal authorities must begin to acquire detailed knowledge of the range, quality, and the needs of the arts in their communities and



define their own objectives and policies for artistic development" (5). In Alberta, an increasing number of municipalities are moving in this direction. Several communities have developed or are in the process of developing cultural plans. This includes Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and the County of Strathcona. A number of communities have hired cultural coordinators or other staff with an interest in the arts.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

What are some of the considerations in planning for arts and cultural activities at the local level? Some of the main issues which have been identified are:

- *Funding* - Financial responsibility for the arts is "one of the most pressing issues to be resolved by municipal governments throughout Canada" (5).
- *Policy Development* - Defining a future direction for the arts will ensure that they can flourish and develop in the community.
- *Understanding the Needs of the Community and the Artists* - Community activity patterns and preferences should be identified. There needs to be a good understanding of facility, equipment, and training needs for professionals and amateurs working in a variety of disciplines.
- *Clarifying Agency Roles* - The roles of various agencies and groups involved in these types of leisure activities often need to be clarified (6). The provision of arts and cultural opportunities requires partnership with other levels of government and cooperation and coordination at the local level.
- *Programming* - These types of leisure opportunities should be available to all community members. Skill development opportunities and access to qualified instructors are important.
- *Support for Community Groups* - Support for community arts and culture groups may include: consultative services, particularly with regard to obtaining grants; encouraging a strong local arts representation through local arts councils; assisting with public relations and audience development; and developing management skills of individuals involved in cultural activities.

COMMUNITY ARTS COUNCILS

One way of providing a voice for the arts is through community arts councils. Community arts councils are non-profit, volunteer-based organizations working at a grassroots level. The main priority of community arts councils is to encourage municipalities to become more involved in cultural activities and to think of an arts component when planning for programmes and facilities.



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PROGRAMMING FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Community arts council may undertake many functions. These vary with the needs and characteristics of the community. Functions which arts councils may take on include:

- Lobbying on behalf of the arts for facilities and programmes.
- Establishing liaison with local arts organizations and artists.
- Providing information to arts groups, such as details about funding opportunities.
- Sponsoring performances, special events, and activities which provide opportunities for artists to display or perform.
- Increasing public awareness of the arts and enhancing community-based support for the arts.

Alberta Culture's Field Services is currently involved in a study of community arts councils (12). At present, there are between 20 and 30 community arts councils operating in Alberta.

The Alberta Municipal Association for Culture a volunteer organization for professionals and volunteers interested in cultural programming. This organization endeavours to provide encouragement for increased community cultural development at the municipal level.

This bulletin has examined some of the issues which are relevant to the development of arts and cultural leisure services in the community. As pointed out, recreation agencies are becoming increasingly involved in this area of programming. There are many things that can be done to encourage participation and public support for these types of leisure activities.

The arts and culture community may feel their needs and interests are not understood. Establishing contact with these groups in the community is the first step in identifying their needs for equipment, training, and facilities. There are many provincial service organizations such as the Alberta Craft Council, the Writer's Guild, and the Theatre and Drama Association of Alberta. These agencies provide valuable resource information about artists and their needs.

The 1984 *Public Opinion Survey on Recreation* found that learning new skills and abilities is an important aspect of participation in cultural leisure activities. Bringing skilled trainers into the community for

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courses or workshops will help to meet this demand for skill development.

Films, videos, and home videos may also be used as valuable cultural programming tools. There are many programmes available from such organizations as the National Film Board. If used effectively, they may offer valuable instruction with minimal cost (9).

Volunteers are a very important aspect of leisure services. Since many of these volunteers must deal with the "business" aspects of arts and culture, they would benefit from volunteer training programmes which are available. Topics which might be useful are dealing with government organizations, fund-raising skills, and board development.

When planning for arts services and events, it is important to dovetail and not compete with other aspects of community's life, such as sports and other recreation patterns (7). For example, in recent years, the Alberta Sports Council has introduced a cultural component in all Provincial, Regional, and Seniors Sports Games. Activities such as poster competitions could be held in conjunction with a sporting event Hiking programmes could be linked with sketching activities.

Encouraging entertainment outside of formal settings such as malls and hospitals will expose more people to the arts. Festivals and special events are also a valuable way of developing a community spirit through arts and culture.

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FUTURE ISSUES

This is the last bulletin based on the 1984 Public *Opinion Survey on Recreation*. We are currently conducting a new survey, the 1988 *General Recreation Survey*. The bulletins will resume when the results of the 1988 survey have been tabulated.



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