

7. Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Arts and culture in a community provide indoor and outdoor events and activities that enhance our quality of life; they encourage diversity and attract tourists that help support the local economy. Recreational opportunities promote healthy lifestyles with the options to relax, play, and socialize.



7.1 Arts and Culture

British Columbia has the largest percentage of its labour force in arts occupations (1.08%). There are 25,9000 artists in the province. Ontario follows at 0.77% or 56,900 artists.¹⁷² The number of artists increased in Canada by 38% from 1991 to 2006, with the greatest increase occurring in BC (58%).¹⁷³

Table : Number of artists and average earnings by occupation in BC, 2006 census

Occupation	Number of artists	% of artists	Average earnings	Earnings gap
Actors and comedians	2,845	11%	\$16,920	52%
Artisans and craftpersons	3,495	13%	\$14,307	59%
Authors and writers	4,305	17%	\$26,655	24%
Conductors, composers and arrangers	320	1%	\$31,267	11%
Dancers	1,320	5%	\$14,143	60%
Musicians and singers	5,890	23%	\$14,088	60%
Other performers	390	2%	\$15,148	57%
Producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations	3,475	13%	\$44,520	-27%
Visual artists	3,840	15%	\$15,607	55%
All 9 arts occupations	25,890	100%	\$21,069	40%
Overall labour force	2,392,805	N/A	\$34,978	0%
<i>Source: Analysis by Hill Strategies Research based on a 2006 census custom data request. All earnings figures captured in the 2006 census relate to the 2005 calendar year.</i>				

Source: Artists in Canada's Provinces and Territories, p.17.

¹⁷² Hill Strategies Research, Arts Research Monitor, March 2009 (v7:10), "Artists in Canada's Provinces and Territories", p.6.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p.10.

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There are more than 1,000 painters, sculptors, ceramic and fibre, wood, graphic and media artists and crafts persons working and living in the Comox Valley.¹⁷⁴

Culture, heritage and history come alive in the Valley at our many venues. There are five museums: Courtenay & District Museum & Palaeontology Centre, Comox Air Force Museum and Heritage Airpark, Cumberland Museum & Archives, Comox Archives & Museum, and the Nim-Nim Interpretive Centre.

The Comox Valley Community Arts Council promotes and supports arts, culture and education in the Valley, hosting exhibitions and juried art shows. They operate the Muir Gallery where there are additional literary events, workshops and presentations. The Muir Gallery workshops and open houses had an attendance of over 2,500 people in 2007.

The Comox Valley Centre for the Arts opened in 2005 after restoration to the former Courtenay fire hall. It is a multi-use community arts facility with meeting spaces, a workshop, public art gallery, craft gallery, gallery shop, plaza, and office space for a number of community arts organizations. Currently, there are 5 resident organizations at the facility. They hold 20 to 25 events each year, and report an average of 10,000 visitors to the Centre.¹⁷⁵

There are also performing art groups in the Comox Valley such as Theatre Works, Rainbow Youth, Courtenay Little Theatre, Gemini Dance Studio, Laurie Tinkler School of Dance, Valley Dance Centre, Light Fantastic Productions, Nova Voce Choral, North Island Choirs, Cantiamo Chambers, and Co-Val. Performances are featured in the community theatres: Old Church Theatre, Sid Williams Theatre, and the Komoux Hall at North Island College. The largest of the community theatres, Sid Williams Theatre, has approximately 10 events a month.

Along with the live theatre venues in town, the Comox Valley has a movie theatre called the Rialto where one can choose from four different films at various times during the day. In 2004 there were 3 movie cinemas in the Valley, but one closed down to make room for a pharmacy, and the other was demolished after a fire.

Cultural events in the Comox Valley range from the Local Colours Festival, The Studio Tours, Artists and Youth Mentorship, The Taiwanese Lantern Festival, Showcase Theatre Festival, Filberg Festival, World Community Film Festival, Big Time Out, and the

¹⁷⁴ Comox Valley Tourism web site, Artists and Artisans, 2008. Visited May 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities, Cultural Facility Profiles: Comox Valley Centre for the Arts. Visited May 2009.

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popular Vancouver Island Music Fest. There will be a new festival added to the roster of events called the Urban Arts Festival which will take place in September of 2008. There is also an annual Heritage Fair, Comox Valley Fall Fair, Nautical Days, Cumberland Empire Days, and the National Aboriginal Day where many different tribes from the Valley meet.

There are numerous dance halls in the Comox Valley that are available to the public for rental, such as the Royston Hall, Fallen Alders, Cumberland Cultural Centre, and the Filberg.

The reality for many arts and culture groups is that funding from all levels of government has shrunk. For arts and culture in the Comox Valley, there was local government funding of 27% in 2003 and 0% in 2005.¹⁷⁶ In 2007, there was 0% funding from local government and 90% funding through the provincial government.

In March 2009, the BC Arts Council awarded more than \$95,000 in grants to groups in the Comox Valley: the Courtenay and District Historical Society, the Comox Valley Art Gallery, the Comox Valley Community Arts Council, Hornby Island Arts Council, and Arts Denman. Funding was also given to the Comox Valley Folk Society and the Hornby Festival Society to assist with the Vancouver Island Music Festival and the Hornby Festival of the Performing Arts.¹⁷⁷

Despite financial obstacles, arts and culture receive enthusiastic public support and continue to thrive. The Comox Valley was awarded the 2007 Cultural Capital of Canada designation through the Department of Canadian Heritage.¹⁷⁸



7.2 Parks and Public Spaces

Since the Comox Strathcona Regional District was split into the Comox Valley Regional District, and the Strathcona Regional District, regional park counts have changed. The Comox Valley Regional District now manages and protects 26 regional parks.¹⁷⁹ There are 3 provincial parks on Hornby Island, 3 on Denman Island, and 4 in the rest of the

¹⁷⁶ Comox Valley Social Planning Society. *2004 Quality of Life Report*, insert on p.58.

¹⁷⁷ Comox Valley Record, "Arts Council Grants Help Valley", March 5, 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Comox Valley Tourism Vancouver Island, Courtenay Tourism BC. *Cultural Capital of Canada 2007*.

¹⁷⁹ Comox Valley Regional District web site, Community Parks. Visited June 2009.

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Comox Valley.¹⁸⁰ The Comox Valley is the gateway to Strathcona Provincial Park, Vancouver Island's largest, and British Columbia's oldest provincial park.¹⁸¹

The City of Courtenay has 34 active municipal parks¹⁸², the Town of Comox has 25 parks¹⁸³ and playing fields, and the Village of Cumberland has 8¹⁸⁴, for a grand total of 67 municipal parks.

7.3 Recreational Usage

In the *2004 QOL Report*, statistics reported for recreation usage by the many facilities in the Valley varied in collection methods and measurements. This practice continues. Comox Recreation collects no usage statistics; however, they offers an "average of 130 different recreation programs each quarter along with some 40 special events each year featuring sports, recreation, arts and culture".¹⁸⁵

19 Wing Comox Fitness and Community Centre reported the following usage¹⁸⁶:

- Arena: 2000 people per week.
- 19 Wing Clubs (6 Clubs): 624 members.
- Recreation Passes: 842 Military, Regular, Ordinary, Associate, Non-Associate (12).
- Teen Centre Memberships and Drop In Guests: 21 Memberships and approx 20 guests per week.
- Pre-Teen Memberships and Activities: 40.

¹⁸⁰ BC Parks web site. Visited June 2009.

¹⁸¹ Comox Valley Tourism web site, Parks and Gardens. Visited May 2009.

¹⁸² Courtenay Parks at a Glance, City of Courtenay.

¹⁸³ Parks and Playing Fields, Town of Comox.

¹⁸⁴ Parks and Greenways Master Plan: Second Draft, February 2009, Village of Cumberland, p.14.

¹⁸⁵ Comox Recreation web site.

¹⁸⁶ Andy Moorhead, FS&R Director, Email and phone conversations. July 2009.