

Arts, Culture & Multi-Media

Relevant Details

Arts - There are only a few Aboriginal arts organizations in Vancouver, but there are several smaller groups and initiatives that are encouraging Aboriginal people, especially youth, to embrace the arts primarily through theatre-based activities. Occasionally, non-Aboriginal theatre companies host an Aboriginal-led and/or focused activity.

Culture - The resurgence of cultural teachings and practices is very strong within First Nations communities in general, and Vancouver as a large urban centre is enjoying the same upsurge. Many more individuals are embracing their heritage and cultural practices through both individual and group learning opportunities. There is a large push to change pan-Aboriginal thinking so that everyone will recognize how diverse the Aboriginal population really is. For instance, there are approximately 52 distinct Aboriginal nations within Canada. Vancouver is home to a very diverse mix of Aboriginal people from across Canada. A conservative estimate would have at least 25 distinct nations represented.

Most of the arts-based groups are also culturally based in their vision and expression, so these two categories will be presented together, and then followed by the multi-media category.

Multi-Media - There are very few Aboriginal media-focused organizations or initiatives based out of Vancouver. While there is access to approximately five western Canada based Aboriginal newspapers, only one is produced in the Vancouver area (Sechelt).

Arts & Culture - Who's Involved?

Indigenous Media Arts Group (1965 Main Street)

- Activities include an annual film and video festival, training and other media related events.
- Mandate is to encourage and facilitate the promotion, development and dissemination of First Peoples media arts, arts and culture, to facilitate training programs in media and arts administration and to operate a resource centre for First Nations people to access information regarding film and video making, media arts, cultural theory and media literacy.

Full Circle: First Nations Performance (555 Great Northern Way)

- Mandate is to create opportunities for Aboriginal artists, writers and performers to express the reality of First Nations experiences and to work in harmony with First Nations traditions while engaging modern, interdisciplinary theatrical techniques. The ensemble members are dancers, singers, actors, clowns, writers, and musicians.
- Best known for the Talking Stick Festival which is a week-long art and culture showcase.

National Aboriginal Day Community Event (at Trout Lake)

- What started as a partnership of 4 Aboriginal organizations to host a community-based event, has grown to include 14 local organizations (see partnerships below for more info).
- The impetus for the creation of this event was to offer a free event that is in a location that is accessible to all Aboriginal families regardless of their economic status.

Aboriginal Art & Culture Celebration Society (438 Seymour Street)

- Mandate is to bring together people to learn, experience and share North American Aboriginal art, culture, values and spirituality and improve the professionalism, visibility and economic circumstances of Aboriginal artists, performers and cultural support workers.
- Best known for the yearly National Aboriginal Day celebrations at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House - Mothers Day Pow-Wow

- Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House hosts this well attended annual event at Trout Lake Community Centre.
- A committee of Aboriginal community members leads the planning in partnership with Cedar Cottage staff.

Musqueam First Nation

- The Musqueam First Nation offers a few specific programs or activities in relation to their traditional language and culture.
- Partners with UBC to develop a language program which includes multi-year courses.

Smaller Ongoing Initiatives

- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre partners with local Aboriginal cultural groups to host weekly Family Nights where Aboriginal cultural groups share their songs and dances with the communities.
- Some organizations work with youth in their programs on plays and other theatre-based activities as a means to engage them while teaching theatre and lifeskills.
- Many First Nation (ie: Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida) and Métis groups have weekly or monthly drumming, singing, and dancing practice with their urban community members in various locations throughout Vancouver.
- Most Aboriginal organizations incorporate both overt and subtle cultural practices, images, and teachings within their programming to encourage participants to learn about and embrace their own culture.
- The Firehall Arts Centre periodically hosts Aboriginal plays.

- Roundhouse Community Centre periodically hosts Aboriginal community-based plays.

Multi-Media - Who's Involved?

Redwire Native Youth Media Society (Vancouver)

- Not-for-profit organization since 1997.
- A media and arts organization dedicated to providing Native youth with an uncensored forum for discussion, in order to help youth find their own voice and to be by, for and about Native youth; all content, editorial decisions and associated media projects are initiated and led by youth, inspiring creativity, motivation and action.
- Redwire is the first Native youth run quarterly magazine. It is distributed nationally.

RedwayBC (440 Cambie Street)

- A website completely driven, designed, created and maintained by urban Aboriginal youth in the Lower Mainland. Over 45 youth researched over 340 pages of content and helped publish 30 e-zines since November, 2003.
- A broad, but critical mission of: Harnessing Technology to Inform, Honour and Connect Urban Aboriginal Youth to Services, Opportunities, the Community and Each Other.

Co-op Radio (360 Columbia Street)

- Non-commercial, co-operatively-owned, listener-supported, community radio station.
- Airs numerous Aboriginal-focused and hosted programs.

Turtle Island Native Network - www.turtleisland.org

- Comprehensive website on Vancouver, BC, national, and international Aboriginal issues.
- Not Vancouver-based, but has lots of useful information.

Partnerships

- Local groups partner to host a community based National Aboriginal Day event at Trout Lake. 2006 partners included Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society, Trout Lake Community Centre, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Warriors Against Violence, Urban Native Youth Association, Aboriginal Front Door, Healthy Aboriginal Network, Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Redwire, RedwayBC, Canadian Armed Forces, KAYA, Aboriginal Expressions, and Spiritlink Communications. In the three years of its existence, partners have increased from 4 to 14 in 2006.

Committees

- None

Trends

- Youth are currently the most active in the Vancouver media field with both Redwire Magazine and RedwayBC website having great success within the broader community.
- Many youth are becoming more involved in the Vancouver music scene, especially through the Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association who has hosted many public events.
- Many youth are becoming more involved in digital video training.

Gaps

- Although there are a number of groups who practice their culture in Vancouver, there are very few, if any, opportunities for individuals to learn about their culture unless they are affiliated with one of the groups.
- There is great interest in theatre within the Aboriginal communities, particularly among youth, but there are no venues that are available to be used consistently and/or they are cost prohibitive.

- There is no Vancouver based Aboriginal newspaper. Such a paper could be very useful to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to present issues, concerns, ideas, positive initiatives, events, etc.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.