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To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

CC: "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"

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"de Castell, Christina" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>

Date: 4/28/2020 3:42:18 PM

Subject: Memo - Hope in Uncertain Times – COVID-19 Response

Attachments: ACCS-ES-VPL - MEMO (Mayor & Council) Hope in Uncertain Times - COVID-19 Response (2020-04-24).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached is a memo from Sandra Singh (GM of ACCS), Lon LaClaire (GM of ENG), and Christina de Castell (GM of VPL), regarding how, during a time of crisis and emergency, arts and culture has a critical role to play. Highlights include:

- **Background:** arts and culture will help the city move from social isolation to social resilience, and will contribute heavily to rebuilding the social, cultural, and economic life of the city as we emerge from this emergency. The City of Vancouver already recognizes arts and culture as an essential pillar of community life
- **Some of the impacts of this initiative:** offer hope to the community in these uncertain times by providing moments of joy and reflection; elevate the value of arts and culture as we experience the integral value the arts play to our well-being
- **All initiatives can be delivered within existing 2020 budget allocations,** drawing mostly on staff time already allocated to each project

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to email Sandra Singh at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Sadhu

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Pronouns: he, him, his



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

MEMORANDUM

April 24, 2020

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Rena Kendall-Craden, Civic Engagement and Communications Director
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Branislav Henselmann, Managing Director, Cultural Services
Margaret Wittgens, Acting Deputy General Manager, Engineering Services

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services
Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian, Vancouver Public Library

SUBJECT: Hope in Uncertain Times – COVID-19 Response

PURPOSE

Cultural Services within Arts, Culture, and Community Services (ACCS), has been working with other departments, specifically Engineering and VPL, to address the current COVID-19 crisis through an arts and culture lens. This memo summarizes existing and new key initiatives that will help our community build resilience and connection during these physically distant times. The initiatives described in this memo will either not require any additional funding other than the staff time already allocated to each project, or will be drawing funding from existing reserves.

BACKGROUND

What we are experiencing right now with COVID-19 is unprecedented, uncertain, and complex. What we know however is that arts and culture are critical in times of crisis and recovery. They offer the power of community connection and a means to experience the trauma and joy of our collective experiences. Arts and culture will help the city move from social isolation to social resilience, and will contribute heavily to rebuilding the social, cultural, and economic life of the city as we emerge from this emergency.

- On March 17, 2020 the Province of BC declared a public state of emergency to support COVID-19 response. Subsequently, Vancouver City council voted unanimously during a virtual special meeting to declare a state of emergency on March 19, 2020.
- During a time of crisis and emergency, arts and culture has a critical role to play. The City of Vancouver already recognizes arts and culture as an essential pillar of community life. This commitment was reinforced on March 31, 2020 at the Council meeting where \$6,273,590 in cultural grants was unanimously approved to support 208 arts and culture organizations with annual assistance, operating and project support.
- In June 2019 the City launched *Resilient Vancouver*, a multi-year strategy that builds our collective capacity to prepare for, recover from, and thrive in the face of changes and challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to practice resilience in action and activate some of the objectives named in the strategy including:
 - Cultivate community connections, stewardship and pride;
 - Empower communities to support each other during crises and recover from disasters; and,
 - Strengthen social and cultural assets and services.
- Funders and other organizations are quickly developing and launching arts and culture funds, which supports the belief that the arts are a critical part of our COVID-19 response and recovery strategy.

ANTICIPATED IMPACT

- Offer hope to the community in these uncertain times by providing moments of joy and reflection.
- Support artists by amplifying their work through various platforms and offering small commissions to provide some income.
- Develop our internal capacity to engage audiences on line and from a distance.
- Elevate the value of arts and culture as we experience the integral value the arts play to our well-being.

ARTS & CULTURE INITIATIVES

The following list summarizes initiatives that have either already been initiated or can get executed relatively quickly. Conception and selection of the projects was a collaborative endeavour between departments - with specific input by Engineering Services' Artist in Residence - deemed to address the social and cultural cohesion and resilience concern most effectively.

Initiative	Description	Department	Resources + Details
1. Artist Commissions <i>Open call for artists in April, with goal to have projects up May/June</i>	New temporary commissions presented on transit shelters, digital screens on street furniture, screens at Robson and Granville, and billboards.	Cultural Services & Engineering	Allocating up to \$80,000 from existing Public Art General Reserve budgeted for Platforms and Emerging Priorities.

2. Message Board <i>Can be activated immediately</i>	Germaine Koh– artist in residence – displaying messages from Vancouverites on digital boards (like those used to signal traffic diversions) in prominent sites in the City	Cultural Services & Engineering	Staff time Budgeting up to \$10,000 for equipment rental from Public Art General Reserve (Emerging Priorities)
3. Building Connection <i>Can be activated immediately</i>	Germaine Koh– artist in residence – curating a collection of social media posts to amplify artworks and other creative gestures from around the world	Cultural Services & Engineering	Staff time Existing contract with Germaine Koh through Engineering
4. Sounds of the City <i>To be activated May - August</i>	Commissioning local artists to curate weekly music playlists featuring local artists in the community throughout the summer season. Playlists are then shared with the community through our communication channels and a potential media partner. This initiative activates the City's approved Vancouver Music Strategy	Cultural Services	\$200 per artist x 16 weeks = \$3,200 Staff time Existing Public Art General Reserve budgeted for Platforms and Emerging Priorities. (If Public Art Reserve is not appropriate, we will revisit this item).
5. Virtual Town Hall <i>Can be activated before the end of April</i>	An opportunity to answer questions and hear stories from the community about the impact of COVID-19 as well as to hear creative ideas for response.	Cultural Services	Staff time
6. Digital Concert Hall <i>Can be activated immediately</i>	A website with a comprehensive list of virtual concerts happening both locally and internationally to engage culture enthusiasts	Vancouver Civic Theatres	Staff time Web design / IT support
7. Isolation Commissions <i>Already activated</i>	Mark Haney – composer in residence – offering donors a chance to give a musician of their choosing \$200 to film a short video performing at home—be it an improvisation, a favourite piece, a work of comfort, or a work in progress	Mountain View Cemetery	Staff time Existing contract with Mark Haney
8. Reality of our Mortality <i>Already activated</i>	Led by Willow End of Life: a series of free online workshops and talking circles to engage the community in thoughtful conversations about grief, life, and death.	Mountain View Cemetery	Staff time Existing partnership with Willow End of Life
9. Storytelling Chats <i>Already activated</i>	Nova Weipert – Indigenous Storyteller in Residence – sharing stories about Indigenous culture, cross-cultural connections and the Two-Spirit journey.	Vancouver Public Library	Staff time Existing contract with Nova Weipert
10. Virtual Book Clubs and Storytime <i>Already activated</i>	<u>Book Clubs</u> : an opportunity to join fellow readers in a discussion online. <u>Storytime</u> : 10am daily songs, rhymes, and stories for kids.	Vancouver Public Library	Staff time IT support

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All initiatives can be delivered within existing 2020 budget allocations, drawing mostly on staff time already allocated to each project. Please note that items #1 Artist Commissions, #2 Message Board, #4 Sounds of the City, and #5 Virtual Town Hall will be funded directly through Cultural Services Public Information budget, and designated Public Art General Reserve (developer funded general capital reserve to the tune of \$91,000).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

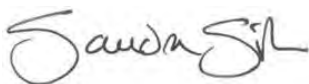
- Explore how we can partner with the local Nations.
- Look at the best way to disseminate information to the community so that they are informed on how to engage with these initiatives.
- Identify additional opportunities that build social resilience and connection.

FINAL WORDS

With events cancelled and venues closed, artists around the world are coming up with creative ways to adapt to physical distancing measures by exploring the virtual space and thinking differently about audience engagement. Now is a time when we need arts and culture more than ever. Art helps us cope in dark times, and helps us find connection even when we are apart. The arts have a critical role to play in helping us rebuild as we recover from this pandemic.

“By nurturing the arts we give ourselves space to grieve, space to express ourselves. Institutions that we are supporting today will be valuable in our recovery efforts and will allow Vancouverites with their mental health to survive this pandemic.”
— Pete Fry, City Councillor

Please don't hesitate to contact the General Managers if you have questions or input.



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