



A Vancouver Art and Cultural Legacy for 2010? Report on a Public Forum (November 7, 2007, 7 – 8:30 pm) Organized by the Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC)

This report was prepared for the IOCC by Brenda Kwan (volunteer).

The Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC)

The IOCC began in 2001 to ensure that the Olympics are environmentally and socially responsible. To this end, the IOCC has been involved in various activities over the years, such as pushing for a referendum on the Olympics during the bid phase. Public forums are hosted by the IOCC as an open dialogue on various issues related to the Games. Reports from all public forums will be available (<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/ioc/>).

Acronyms Used in This Report

IOCC = Impact on Community
Coalition

VANOC = Vancouver Organizing
Committee for the 2010 Olympic and
Paralympic Winter Games

Introduction

The forum was held in Labatt Hall at SFU at Harbour Centre. Over 40 people attended the forum. Am Johal (IOCC) moderated the forum. The panel was composed of the following eight speakers:

Duncan Low (Former Director of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre)
Sadira Rodrigues (Adult Programs Coordinator, Vancouver Art Gallery)
Elvy Del Bianco (VanCity, Research Associate)
Diane Roberts (Urban Ink Theatre)
Jonathan Middleton (Or Gallery)
Reid Shier (Presentation House Gallery)
Dennis Brown (Artist)
Irwin Oostindie (Gallery Gachet)

A brief summary of each speaker's comments follows.

Duncan Low

Former Director of Vancouver East Cultural Centre

Duncan supports the 2010 Games. He was seconded in 2003 for seven months to work on Celebration 2010. During the Bid phase, he was told that arts and culture was central to the Games. However, when there is a budget squeeze, arts and culture gets cut. In the Bid Book, cultural programs were planned, and were due to start after the Games ended in Turin, with a four-year (2007-2010) Cultural Olympiad. However, from 2006-2007, there have been no cultural activities. During the Games, there is supposed to be a five-week festival. There has yet to be an

Artistic Director appointed for this festival. Work on venues is progressing, but arts and culture is not part of VANOC's budget. Sydney (2000) had three cultural festivals, and London (2012) already has three Artistic Directors. Duncan believes that cultural community has a role in creating a cultural legacy. The government should support, rather than control, this.

Sadira Rodrigues

Adult Programs Coordinator, Vancouver Art Gallery

In 2005, Sadira started working at Legacies Now. The Legacies were part of the Bid, with \$13.5 million for arts and culture. Sadira now works at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The term "legacies" has frequently been used with respect to the Games. This suggests both tangible and intangible benefits. Sadira wanted to note three points about legacies: 1) Bid Book (expectations); 2) real possibilities; and 3) sense of responsibility for the arts community to take opportunities vs. being passive.

The 2010 Games was the first Games to include social sustainability (community development). Inclusion, representation, and participation are three ideas in the legacies in both arts and culture and sports. There was a promise to build into programs the following: 1) inter-cultural legacies; 2) cultural activities that reflect global and Aboriginal influences (four host nations); and 3) commissioning new

works. Sadira was at Legacies Now from 2005-2006, and believes these opportunities still exist. Looking at the build-up to 2010, we are at the event production phase. With respect to real possibilities (realities), it really is about sport. Funding for arts and culture is mostly from (private) ticket sales, and not from the government. However, this is no justification for excluding community participation. Arts and culture is so closely tied to the event and the feelings that go with the event. With respect to opportunities, the arts and culture community should have a dialogue amongst themselves, rather than waiting to be invited to have a dialogue.

Elvy Del Bianco

VanCity, Research Associate

Elvy is intrigued with the idea that arts and culture are crucial to the post-modern economy. Elvy worked on a VanCity report titled "The Power of the Arts in Vancouver: Creating a Great City."

Almost \$56 million from governments has been given to arts and culture groups, but it really isn't that much money with inflation and more groups. Funding is weighted for projects, and not administration (which has to do with the capacity of organizations). Little attention has been paid to affordable housing, which affects artists. One conclusion from the VanCity report is that there are isolated players vs. a network of players. Therefore, more support is needed (public

administration), as well as smarter funding.

Elvy is at VanCity to help organizations get more funding. He has met with and learned from the cultural organizer at Torino. With a modest budget, there wasn't enough money for original programming. A portion was used to bring the community together. The rest of the money was used to develop a catalogue (1-800-number, etc.). There was money for coordinating vs. for programs; activities were coordinated for the Games. The legacy is that people are working together (networks). An example is events with participation from multiple organizations. We won't get this in Vancouver, which will just be more project funding.

Elvy had voted "no" in the 2003 Vancouver Olympic plebiscite, because the resources would be directed elsewhere instead of where they should be directed.

Diane Roberts

Urban Ink Theatre

Diane's big question is whose legacy is it that will be funded by money from Legacies Now. There are words of power, such as "legacy," which have hidden and unhidden codes. An example is the word "inukshuk." Another word is "underserved," which can be found on the VANOC website, and is similar to the word "undeserved." Other words on the website include "Aboriginal" and "disabled." Diane is interested in

lasting legacies in word, dance, and spirit. The question is how do we retrieve commonality of experience and find new commonalities?

Jonathan Middleton

Or Gallery

People who were around during Expo 86 had strong cautions against the 2010 Games, because money had been put into short-term projects in arts, which did not build infrastructure and capacity in the arts. Chris Olsen in the Vancouver Review lamented Vancouver's alternative spaces.

As the Director of the Or Gallery, Jonathan has seen a 100% increase in rent in a two-year period and the gallery is looking for new space. If there is to be a legacy, like the Olympiad, then infrastructure should be one of the legacies. For example, transportation and the cultural sector have been underserved. Legacies Now is project-heavy. Jonathan does not dismiss it, but it is taxing to organizations, especially smaller ones. Organizations have to continue to apply for funding, when there isn't much out there.

Reid Shier

Presentation House Gallery

Reid commented that the other speakers have already mentioned many of the points that he wanted to note. The Presentation House Gallery is a photo media gallery housed in a 103-year-old building in North Vancouver. There is

no disability access, and it is too hot in the summer, such that the gallery needs to be closed, because there is no humidity control. This also prevents the gallery from obtaining (borrowing) some exhibits. Reid has little to no hope that the Games will advance the cause to get funding for better infrastructure. Millennium Development Corp would give the City of North Vancouver some ("bonus") money for an extra 24 floors of development, some of which could go to the gallery. However, some people are against this development, because the condo tower is contrary to sustainability and livability.

Dennis Brown

Artist

Dennis has a studio with 30 other people at 901 Main Street. The building was built in 1913. Dennis does not claim to know anything about the Olympics, such as legacies. They are probably mostly a lot of bunk. However, Dennis realized at today's forum that it can bring people together.

A developer recently bought the building. We have just organized and have two issues (but little experience and resources): 1) whether we can stay in the building and keep it viable; and 2) what will happen with culture in the city in the future.

We can build legacies by: 1) organizing people; 2) fighting for enlightened policy (government-supported infrastructure is needed) and 3) get funding established, so people have

somewhere to go when they lose studio space to developers. Maybe developers can incorporate art into development or offer some other "deal" or "bonus."

Irwin Oostindie

Gallery Gachet

Conversations should not be focused just on 2010. We have a weak cultural sector, with a lack of resources. We need to look internally at ourselves, to reflect, inspire, give hope, and challenge injustice.

Irwin was involved in the Inner-city working group. There has been no Olympic funding to the BC Arts Council. There also is no cultural Sectoral Table (VANOC). We don't know where the money goes; there is no transparency. Irwin works for cultural policy development. He is helping to co-write a report on a funding strategy to create a network of disability artists. In the Downtown Eastside, a lot of arts organizations are actually quite organized compared to other parts of the city.

Dialogue

This section highlights some of the questions and comments from the audience (in italics) and the responses from the speakers/audience:

- *Larger institutions have access to larger capital funds, but what about smaller institutions? It is hard to get capital funding for improvements. Traditional financial institutions steer away from this. Density bonuses work well, because the city doesn't see the contribution from the developer as a cultural funding commitment. However, the density bonus is a double-edged sword, in that there is an onus to raise funds because the money is not free or clear, and there won't be more money. People often don't think about capital after three years. Having grants that allow down payments is important. For example, in Quebec City and old heritage building was converted for multi-use, with living space and studios.*
- *Timing is important to coalesce the arts community. What can realistically be done with respect to the Olympics? The Big Six institutions know they are participating, but small- and mid-sized institutions are losing out, and yet there has been no discussion about mobilization. The arts community could tell VANOC that the arts community will not participate, but people are looking at it as individual opportunity (rather than a community). Could the legacy be mobilization? It seems to be the only thing.*
- *Tax benefits are given to people who give money to the Culture Crawl (a charitable receipt is given). Is this an idea to think about? A lot of smaller organizations are charities, and still*

struggle with fund raising because of a lack of human resources, so it is more a question of capacity. If an organization is not a charity, it can work with other larger organizations to figure out a process for issuing charitable receipts through the larger organization.

- *\$13.5 million was supposed to have been spent during a two-year period at Legacies Now. What was it used for? It was supposed to be four years, and 40% has been spent now. In 2006, the allocation shifted because of different demands. Why has there been no public outrage? It is because of the fear of potentially losing funding.*
- *It is easy to talk about buildings and real estate, and we are like other places in economic boom, with studios in unpoliced space. Is there a method to not colonize ruled spaces, and preserve/create such space? An example is an industrial space that was converted to condos over 20 years ago. We need spaces for transitory activities for new organizations to emerge. It looks like cheap space where you can do what you want. If tourism and real estate interests dominate, these could be taxed, like speculative money to create funds for social investment. Older empty buildings can be taken over by the City, and cheaper rent could be charged. This is a public policy argument.*

- *Without spaces to create culture, you no longer have culture. The city as world stage must put energy back into culture to build cultural identity and get artists together. It's confusing that when one does stand up, it is not recognized. We have a weak arts alliance. People could join the Alliance for Arts and Culture, or join the IOCC arts and culture task force. Collective organizing is the only way. There are opportunities through corporate banks. We need to take responsibility as artists. The non-profit sector got deep cuts in recent years, and tend not to speak publicly for fear of losing more money. Therefore, mediation ends up being through bureaucracy and political parties.*