



The Corporation of the Town of Hearst

Cultural Policy

November 2007

« Culture is not a luxury, it is a necessity. » Gao Xingjian

History

Incorporated in 1922, the Town of Hearst was quickly colonized by the development of the railway and agricultural policies of the provincial government. In its beginnings, Hearst was an important railway centre with its settlers mainly comprised of retired railway workers. In addition, with the government's promise of prosperous land, it was able to attract settlers from various regions of Canada and Europe; this in turn contributing to our vast local culture. In the development stages of the region, residents of Hearst and surrounding areas consisted of Finnish, British, Slavic, Slovak, Chinese, and French Canadians. With the exception of the latter, the population of these diverse ethnicities that contributed to the development of the North has considerably diminished throughout the years. The French Canadians, being more numerous, founded communities and established themselves, solidifying their strong French Canadian culture. Nevertheless, the other settlers left remnants of their respective cultures, which we still find today in certain activities and stories passed down throughout generations.

As the home of a nearly 90% francophone population in an ever-increasing English Ontario, Hearst rejoices in its French-Ontarian culture. Throughout the years, a large number of young artists have brought recognition to Hearst both on provincial and national levels. Their beginnings are often attributed to the efforts of "le Collège, académie et la Pitoune" - a cultural centre of the 1970's. Since then, the Arts Council of Hearst has taken over, and has continued to organize shows of varying genres, including music and art showings such as drawings/sketches, paintings, sculptures, and so on. In addition, the Arts Council of Hearst manages The Gallery 815 aimed at presenting art exhibitions and promoting community theatre.

Mission

A cultural policy will allow the community to develop a sense of pride and belonging by appreciating the abundance and dynamics of our culture. The promotion of our culture will help project a distinctive image of our surroundings and aid in the development of our tourism industry as well as our socioeconomics. A cultural policy is necessary in order to:

- Express and assert our local cultural identity;
- Better understand the expectations and needs of our society;
- Establish a long term vision for our cultural development;
- Integrate culture with the concerns of the municipality;
- Facilitate discussions and negotiations with organizations and other cultures;
- Determine the roles and responsibilities of each contributor in the hosting of cultural activities.

Guiding Principles

The Town will foster the birth and development of cultural projects with diverse partners. The level of its commitment will depend on its available resources, including financial and human, and the establishment of possible partnerships with local groups and other levels of government. In order that cultural development be nurtured, the Town recognizes the following principles:

- Culture belongs to every citizen and must therefore be accessible to all;
- Culture, art, heritage, and history are all factors of identity and enrichment; they promote a sense of belonging to a community;
- Cultural development includes all forms and skills of art:
 - Visual art
 - Public art
 - Stage art (theatre, dance, etc.)
 - Written art (literature)
 - Heritage and history
 - Festivals and cultural events
 - The natural environment
 - Cinematography
- Local artists' creative development must be encouraged;
- Cultural development proceeds in harmony with other municipal operations. It leads to the betterment of the community, including the development of the area, economy, and tourism;
- The arts and culture are an important driving force in the development of the tourism industry and must therefore be integrated into tourism projects;
- Cultural development is a common responsibility and must be shared amongst different levels of government, institutions, local groups and the population;
- Culture plays an important role in the development of the community, in establishing a sense of identity, and in the quality of life of its citizens.

Foundation

Being concerned with the constant improvement of the quality of life of its population, the Town of Hearst acknowledges the importance of culture. Culture is an essential measure of the vitality of a municipality as it strongly influences the social, economic, and tourist development of the Town. It is therefore necessary for the Town to express its vision and commitment towards the cultural development of its residents. With this in mind, the following guidelines will direct the establishment of a cultural mandate that will serve the Town for years to come:

- The Town of Hearst recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting the francophone spirit of its community.
- The Town also recognizes the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of diverse ethnic groups of the area.

- The Town is the closest level of government, and is in a position to understand the aspirations and expectations of its population.
- The Town is a facilitator between different levels of government, institutions, organisms, businesses, and others socioeconomic groups for the development of the community. Therefore, the elected individuals and municipal employees represent the Town when dealing with government and agencies.
- The Town has the responsibility to incorporate cultural components into its tourist development projects.
- The Town has the responsibility to integrate cultural development with the overall goals of the Municipality by:
 - Integrating cultural components in all relevant aspects of the municipal administration,
 - Associating cultural activities with other activities (for example, by organizing a visit of a cultural site, such as the Sports Hall of Fame within the scope of a conference),
 - Liaising with different cultural sectors,
 - Recognizing the role artists play in the community.
- The goal of integrating the cultural development within the Municipality is to optimize the use of existing resources and maximize favourable conditions in order to create a greater sense of community amongst residents.
- The Town is charged with the responsibility of exploring individual and collective ideas from the community in order to reach its objectives. Its role is to channel energy towards a common goal in order to optimize resources while building a sense of community.
- The Town recognizes the importance of promoting culture, contributing to the vitality of cultural organisms, and facilitating agreements and collaborations amongst partners at all levels.
- The Town intends to sustain its cultural involvement, assume the role of enhancing our historical knowledge, and protect its natural heritage.
- The cultural policy must evolve to meet our changing needs.

Objectives

In order to respect the above precepts, the Town of Hearst shall accomplish the following objectives:

- Support cultural organisms in their endeavours to form partnerships with private businesses;
- Keep citizens informed of activities and cultural resources available in their town;
- Improve the awareness of our history and heritage;
- Protect and highlight the value of our natural environment and heritage;
- Link the natural environment with cultural development (for example, by developing a taxonomic key for our surrounding vegetation);
- Recognize the contribution of artists, participants, and cultural organisms;
- Value the contributions and suggestions of participants;
- Encourage and value the contribution of volunteers to our cultural life;
- Support, to its best ability and availability of resources, community organizations;
- Encourage the development of new cultural activities;

- Facilitate the relationship between creators and citizens;
- Consult the population about needs in matters of culture;
- Pursue offers of services in a supportive manner.

Development Efforts

The Town of Hearst, by means of its cultural policy, wishes to define its direction for the coming years. Its cultural policy will support and permit it to establish a sense of unity and give it the ability to execute future action plans. In addition to the objectives stated above, the Town desires to focus particular attention on the following areas:

Heritage and History

- The population must be made aware of and understand the importance of heritage. There is a need to stimulate interest to safeguard the conservation and the preservation of our heritage.
- The preservation of our natural heritage means the improvement and protection of the wilderness, and requires the planting of cleared areas in a manner that promotes and protects the trees.
- It is also important that we consider human heritage, men and women who brought about important change that altered our society as a whole. They represent a significant part of our heritage and merit our esteem.

Consequently, objectives that pertain to our heritage and history are as follows:

- Acknowledge that the Municipality comprises a number of industries and areas, each possessing their own identity to be valued and sustained;
- Improve the understanding of our history and heritage;
- Protect and value the natural environment and heritage;
- Understand the link between the natural environment and cultural development;
- Continue the identification of our heritage and encourage its preservation, its development, and its diffusion throughout the community;
- Bring attention to the women and men who contributed to the history of Hearst;
- Document the highlights and turning points of our history by the written and oral accounts of our pioneers;
- Inform citizens about the importance of conserving significant elements of our heritage;
- Collaborate in the identification and enhancement of heritage sites;
- Profit from the planning and development of projects by instilling an appreciation of heritage;
- Recognize the importance that culture has on tourism.

The Public Library

The Town recognizes that the library is an important gateway to the world of culture and knowledge. The library is charged with the mission of information, education, culture, and relaxation.

The general objectives that pertain to the administration of the public library are as follows:

- Access to knowledge, information, and culture is a right; the library will therefore ensure that all citizens have equal access to its services by:
 - Adapting its services to the needs of its clientele: education groups (schools), elderly and handicapped persons, etc.,
 - Operating during hours that are relevant to the needs of the population.
- The library, being a location with a vast amount of information, and heritage, will ensure the sharing of this knowledge by:
 - Assuring a continued development of its collections,
 - Developing/adapting new technologies that will grant access to new sources of information,
 - Maintaining its relationships with other libraries to increase the sharing of resources.
- As reading is a common way to gain insight into our culture, the library will contribute in promoting and raising awareness of reading by:
 - Developing programs and activities that promote the competencies of our local writers, researchers, and historians,
 - Developing awareness programs for young children that encourage reading,
 - Combining reading with other leisure activities.

The Promotion of Arts and Culture

The Town recognizes the contribution of its artists and intends to support their cause. The Town wants to participate in the creation of conditions that integrate different art forms into its culture and help raise awareness of its artists. Thus, the general objectives to be accomplished that pertain to the promotion of the arts and culture are as follows:

- Promote the Town's image by using artistic and cultural elements as communication tools and in activities hosted by the Town;
- Develop commitments with the private sector, favouring projects that bring public recognition and visibility;
- Support the Arts Council of Hearst in its initiatives by encouraging its development and recognizing its continued contribution to the vitality of the arts;
- Recognize the importance of encouraging local artists to express themselves artistically throughout the community;
- Develop a system whereby artists' works can be displayed in public places within the Town;
- Assure the vitality of cultural organizations and artists by encouraging their development and recognizing their contribution to society;
- Promote the purchase of local artists' works;
- Participate in improving the promotion of upcoming events.

Conclusion

This cultural policy expresses the spirit of culture and describes the directions to be taken by the community which will enliven the harmonious development of our cultural life in Hearst. Culture is an expression of our fundamental values, reinforced by society, and it does not create nor manage itself; it lives, individually and collectively. We must protect it, preserve it, nurture it.