

## CULTURE DAYS BACKGROUNDER

Culture Days ([www.culturedays.ca](http://www.culturedays.ca)) was conceived in response to the growing recognition that a vibrant arts and cultural sector contributes directly to a healthy and stable society.

Individual artists, cultural groups, organizations, municipalities and festivals offer free participatory and interactive arts and cultural activities during the Culture Days weekend each year.

Launched in September 2010 in every province and territory and now in its third year, the voluntary Culture Days movement represents the largest-ever collective public participation campaign undertaken by the arts and cultural community in Canada.

As a civil society driven initiative, Culture Days is overseen by a volunteer [national Steering Committee](#) and volunteer [provincial Task Forces](#) from a variety of backgrounds including cultural programming, tourism, municipal cultural planning, public engagement, and more, who rally their arts and cultural communities and municipalities to promote the event to the public at the regional and local level.

Municipalities, local arts councils and other volunteer community organizers play an increasingly vital role in the implementation of Culture Days in their cities and towns, helping to champion the event by mobilizing artists, organizations and local partners to participate and promote the event.

Established in 1997, Québec's annual [Journées de la culture](#) event inspired the initiation of Culture Days and is part of the annual celebration, as is [Alberta Culture Days](#) (formerly Alberta Arts Days), established in 2008.

Culture Days aims to:

- Foster appreciation and support of the artistic and cultural life that is lived, created and expressed across the country in urban centers and rural communities alike.
- Stimulate and strengthen a sense of ownership of arts and culture by citizens in their local communities.
- Promote direct interaction between creators and the public as a key to increasing understanding and appreciation for art and culture.
- Affirm that every citizen is the guardian of the cultural life of his or her community.

## The Evolution of Culture Days

Inspired by the success and impact of Quebec's *Journées de la culture* event, celebrating its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, leaders of Canada's largest arts organizations (as participants in the Canadian Arts Summit) commissioned a feasibility study in 2007 to assess the viability and appropriateness of launching an annual national celebration of arts and culture.

The study examined the annual three-day *Journées de la culture* event produced by Culture pour tous as an original, dynamic, internationally-recognized Canadian model for raising public participation and engagement in arts and culture in communities all across Québec.

One year later, The Canadian Arts Summit voted and agreed unanimously to initiate a strategic collaboration with Culture pour tous to facilitate a similar national event. The Banff Centre, which now serves the role of national secretariat assuming all relevant fiduciary responsibilities, also supported the program from its early beginnings along with Canada Council for the Arts.

As a grassroots, citizen-focused project, Culture Days responds directly to issues addressed by the *Coalition for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, of which Canada is a founding member. The Coalition points clearly to the importance of engaging citizens of the signatory countries of the associated United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention.

After two years, Culture Days continues to build on enthusiastic interest, commitment, and collaboration from a rapidly growing network of artists and organizations, municipalities and private and public sector leaders across the country. Please consult the [2011 Report](#) for details on the results and impact of Culture Days.

## **Culture Days Founding Partners**

### **Canadian Arts Summit**

[The Canadian Arts Summit](#) was founded in 1998 by The Banff Centre and the Council for Business and the Arts in Canada (now Business for the Arts). The Canadian Arts Summit is a unique national leadership forum, coordinated by The Banff Centre. It is held in late March/early April of each year and brings together the chief executives, artistic directors, and board chairs of Canada's largest 50 not-for-profit cultural institutions: symphony orchestras, theatres, opera and ballet companies, as well as heritage and art museums — primarily those with budgets over \$5 million.

The Summit is predicated upon the belief that these influential leaders — volunteers, artists, and managers — can, by working together, develop the strengths required to support Canadian artistic aspirations. The first principle behind the Summit is that it is a gathering of leaders, the outcome of which is shaped by the participants. For that reason, the Summit has become, over its first fifteen years, not just a weekend event in the spring, but an ongoing network of arts leaders working together, through the Steering Committee, throughout the year.

### **Culture pour tous**

[Culture pour tous](#) is an independent not-for-profit organization whose mission is to contribute to the democratization of culture in Quebec. Culture pour tous arose from the firm conviction that the arts and culture are at the heart of Quebec's social and economic development. In 2007, the *Secrétariat des Journées de la culture* changed its legal name in order to better reflect its objectives and the activities it has carried out over the past decade. The organization is a major player in cultural mediation and democratization, at the heart of a network of artists, craftspeople and cultural workers engaged in efforts of this type throughout Quebec.

The goals and actions of Culture pour tous serve to facilitate, for as many people as possible, access to and appropriation of the arts and culture. The organization instigates and carries out initiatives that encourage access to and participation in creative and cultural activities including *Journées de la culture*, *Cultural Logbook*, *Art at Work* and *La Rencontre*.

## **The Banff Centre**

[The Banff Centre](#) is Canada's creative leader in arts and culture whose mission is *Inspiring Creativity*. Arts programs are at the core of The Banff Centre. Programming supports the commissioning and creation of new work by individual artists and arts companies, and provides resources for collaboration and applied research. Training and professional development at the post-graduate level is available in more than a dozen art forms including Aboriginal arts, music, theatre, dance, opera, literature, ceramics, print-making, painting, photography, sculpture, audio engineering, digital film and video, and new media. Work is showcased in public performance, events, and exhibitions throughout the year, and during the annual Banff Summer Arts Festival.

## **Canada Council for the Arts**

[The Canada Council for the Arts](#) is Canada's national, arm's-length arts funding agency. Its main areas of activity are:

- *Grants*: The Canada Council for the Arts provides funding to individual professional artists and arts organizations through a peer assessment process.
- *Endowments and Prizes*: Each year the Canada Council for the Arts awards fellowships and prizes to some 200 artists and scholars.
- [Research](#), communications and [arts promotion](#) activities also furthers its mandate to support, promote and celebrate the arts.

The Canada Council Art Bank, the Killam Program, the Public Lending Right Commission and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO are all administered through the Canada Council for the Arts.