

The background image shows an art gallery with a high ceiling and track lighting. A woman is standing in the center, looking at a display. The walls are covered with framed photographs. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Mapping Northern  
Creative Spaces

# Kenora and Sioux Narrows– Nestor Falls

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Community Report

Dr. Jude Ortiz, Diana Moser and Sean Meades

May 30, 2021

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to the project partners for their time and energy in promoting the project, participating in the virtual forums and their insights into the arts, culture and heritage sector in their communities.

## Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls



### City of Kenora

*Megan Dokuchie*



### Northwest Business Centre

*Allyson Pele*



### Lake of the Woods Arts Community

*Leanne Fournier*



### Lake of the Woods Museum and Douglas Family Art Centre

*Lori Nelson, Sophie Lavoie*



### Township of Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls

*Heather Gropp*



### Sioux Narrows Arts Festival

*Maury Swenson, Kathy Valentini*

ArtsBuild Ontario and NORDIK Institute acknowledge the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts for the Mapping Northern Creative Spaces project.



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada

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NORDIK Institute (NORDIK) is an innovative community-based research hub affiliated with Algoma University that supports the region's community economic development initiatives.



*The final report does not necessarily reflect the views of the funder, ArtsBuild Ontario, NORDIK Institute or Algoma University.*

# Executive Summary

Key arts organizations and/or sector representatives from Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and Wawa partnered with ArtsBuild Ontario (ABO) and NORDIK Institute (NORDIK) to conduct the Mapping Northern Creative Spaces. The study undertook to map the four communities' existing creative spaces, assess if spaces are meeting current and future needs, and identify the potential demand and feasibility for additional creative spaces within the community. The resulting reports are informational, providing a statistical base for future projects, programs, and advocacy and serves to encourage cross-sector discussion and dialogue to support further development.

Surveys found creative space in Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls and its animation is contributing to local identity and belonging, and the development of innovative, unique products and services that are recognized beyond its borders. It is engaging people that range in age from 16 to over 70, illustrating the importance of art in one's life over time. Current activities are attracting local and seasonal residents as well as tourists. At least five organizations have operated for more than 20 years, including one for more than 50 years. They have a variety of management structures, drawing on paid employment, volunteer labour, and combinations thereof. Individual respondents indicated their practice disciplines are diverse with a very strong emphasis on visual arts, followed by a particular focus on community arts, music, theatre and performance. When compared to what programming is currently offered, there appears to be underutilized capacities (i.e. music, theatre, film, performance, heritage, mixed-media, multi-disciplinary) and a desire to increase engagement in these areas as well as other disciplines.

Participants, specifically 56% of the total respondents (28 of 50), identified a need for more creative space and provided direction regarding operational structures, type/purpose of space, programming they wish to deliver and audiences they wish to reach. Thirty have creative space; 13 do not have space; and, three individuals want the space for their private needs, while the rest would like the space open to the public. The majority of individuals have no preference between leased or owned space; however, organizations prefer to lease. All respondents preferred a city/town location to a rural site. **The primary type of space individual participants are seeking is retail and discipline-specific studio space, followed by exhibition, performance and multi-disciplinary hubs. Organizations' indicated performance, followed by discipline-specific studio space, rehearsal and performance space.** In terms of acquiring creative space, **13 respondents are willing or interested in partnering with others to purchase, rent and/or build a creative space.** Participants also noted challenges and considerations around acquiring and developing space, and the skills and resources to assist with achieving their goals and sustaining their operations.

In sum, the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area has considerable assets upon which to further enliven and strengthen the arts and culture sector. Municipal government has invested in cultural infrastructure in both locales in the past. Those engaged in the arts demonstrate expertise, commitment and perseverance; however, sector investment (financial, in-kind support, and leadership) would advance community health and wellbeing and foster the skills for ongoing innovation and renewal in response to the dynamic knowledge economy. It is recommended that a dedicated full-time, limited term contract be hired to create a development plan to address the creative space needs identified in this study. The person would work in collaboration with the project partners and others dedicated to advancing arts and culture in the area, for example, Kenora's Community Service Department personnel, and an identified personnel of Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls.

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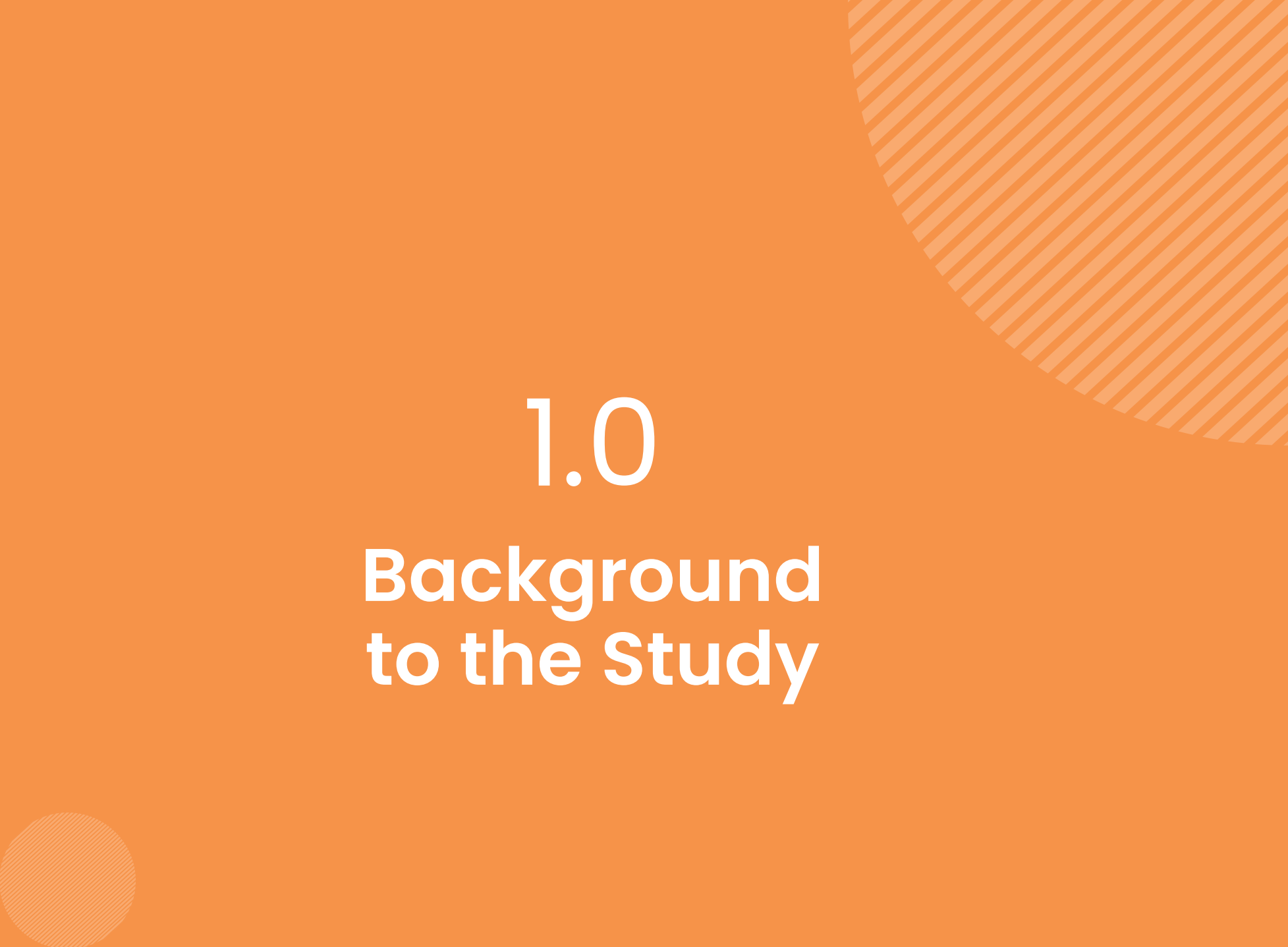
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# Kenora and Sioux Narrows– Nestor Falls

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# 1.0

## Background to the Study

Northern Ontario's economy has been based primarily on resource-extraction around forestry and mining which has become precarious in many communities following decades of globalization. Most jurisdictions have made efforts to diversify their economies by developing local assets and resources. This has increased attention on the arts and culture sector's potential to redefine community through creative placemaking initiatives, leading to greater quality of life, attractiveness and the emergence of place-based creative economies.

An interdisciplinary international review conducted by Nancy Duxbury summarizes three storylines that describe cultural work in rural and remote locales: (1) cultural vitality, that is, culture as a resource for community development; (2) the 'rural creative class', recently linked to rural innovation; and (3) rural creative economies and creative entrepreneurship in rural and remote areas (Duxbury, 2020).

These themes are useful in understanding the contributions the sector can make to sustainability and resilience, and the various lenses through which it is perceived. An earlier study by Duxbury and Jeannotte (2012) speaks to the complexity communities face in linking culture to sustainability and integrating it into local plans. Such links necessitate space for citizen participation to articulate divergent perspectives of development that exist between cultures, holistic worldviews, and the reigning dominant privileged economic form of value.

In large urban centres, the arts and culture sector operate through the social milieu, including complex linkages between producers, intermediaries and consumers. Symbiotic relationships are developed through social networking at galleries, institutions, events, cafes, clubs, and restaurants that enable a continual supply of unique cultural goods and services that define a place. The sector's vitality is underpinned by connectivity – a combination of networks, private and public infrastructure (e.g. creative spaces) that facilitate engagement, education, innovation and commercial activity (Currid, 2007a; 2007b).

In Northern Ontario, the sector functions similarly, and as such, is also reliant upon cultural infrastructure to create the social milieu in which the sector can flourish. One significant difference between urban and rural communities, however, is that arts and culture infrastructure in densely populated areas already exists and is typically provided by public and/or private investment. In less densely populated areas, however, there is a dearth of critical components, 'missing links' hindering the ability to engage, share, learn and connect to each other and the public. These limitations are negatively impacting on: maintaining a creative practice; developing a sustainable livelihood; sector and public engagement; and utilizing the arts for community economic and social development. Deficits include governance (policy and planning, human resources, research capacity), networks and organizations, sustainable funding models, education and business development supports (marketing mechanisms, and affordable operating space and live/work accommodations).

Various communities have begun to address these gaps through cultural policies and planning documents, investing in infrastructure and grants, and business development support. It is important to note that artists themselves are playing a critical role in provisioning the region's community infrastructure deficits, creating festivals and events, networks and organizations, and creative spaces, supporting the development of creativity, innovation, artistic capacity, identity and belonging and the 'rural social milieu'—a broader more inclusive version than urban industry-centric milieus—that fosters more public participation, and thus, resilience (Ortiz, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of arts and cultural activities to peoples' health and well-being, while simultaneously highlighting the challenge of maintaining creative space for many of these activities to occur. The creative sector has shown great resilience during this time by providing new innovative offerings through a variety of formats.

# 1.1 Project Overview

The Mapping Northern Creative Spaces Project, led by ArtsBuild Ontario and NORDIK Institute, undertook to map four communities' existing creative spaces, assess if spaces are meeting current and future needs, and identify the potential demand and feasibility for additional creative spaces within these communities. Due to the tight timeline, communities were approached to gauge their interest in the study based on a matrix of factors including geographic location, size, and working relationships with NORDIK. Outreach to key arts and culture sector organizations in Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and Wawa resulted in the partnerships. The project partners for Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls included the City of Kenora, Lake of the Woods Museum and Douglas Family Art Centre, Lake of the Woods Arts Community, Northwest Business Centre, Township of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, and Sioux Narrows Arts Council. They promoted the survey and forums in the community, responded to the survey and participated in the forums, and reviewed the report drafts.

The project has the goal of providing a snapshot of the creative spaces in the community – what exists, where there are gaps and needs, what are the concerns, ideas, and hopes for the future. It evaluates each community's inventory of potential artistic places/spaces, reports on each community's practices, and informs recommendations for creative space projects to strengthen the northern arts sector. The project aims to fill a knowledge gap around facility management within the northern arts sector by identifying preliminary means to address the creative space needs of these communities.

The resulting report provides an informational and statistical base for future projects, programs, and advocacy and serves to encourage cross-sector discussion and dialogue to support further development.

There are four components to the project:

- i) online survey of each community to collect data;
- ii) online forums for each community to review their survey findings and discuss pathways forward;
- iii) a four-community online forum to share learnings and mobilize knowledge; and
- iv) a final project report comprised of each community report that incorporates the data from the surveys, community forums, and the four-community forum.

NORDIK obtained ethics approval through Algoma University to guide the research in an appropriate manner with Dr. Jude Ortiz as principal investigator. Two online surveys were the primary data collection tools. One survey was designed for individual respondents with or without creative space. The second one was for representatives from organizations with or without creative space. The surveys were hosted by NORDIK through SurveyMonkey and were live in the communities October–November 2020. The partners were provided survey promotional materials to distribute throughout their networks. ABO and NORDIK also sent out a project press release, which resulted in regional news, radio, and television interviews about the project.



Once the surveys closed, ABO and NORDIK presented an initial analysis of the data to the partners at the virtual community forum, providing them an overview of the information and an opportunity to comment and provide feedback, which was incorporated into the project data. Forum registration was through Eventbrite and the meeting was hosted through Zoom. Live captioning was provided in English and the forum was recorded for back-up reference, purposes only. All participation in the project was voluntary, survey results were anonymous, and any comments from the community forum are referred to anonymously.

Project results are available through the project partners and the websites of ABO and NORDIK. Each partner community received a tailored report, and the results of the entire project are compiled in one final report that includes all four of the communities. This final report is available in English and French, as well as in large text formats. Audio recordings of the final report are available in both English and French on ABO's website.

There were some limitations to the project, especially from the impact of COVID-19. The project was designed to conduct an in-person focus group in each community to map their assets, followed by a 4-community online forum. Due to COVID-19 restrictions it was redesigned to collect data through a survey tool, which is considerably less engaging. While the response rate was not particularly high, the partners confirmed that the data is reflective of their knowledge of the community. Zoom fatigue also impacted the attendance at the virtual community forum; however, participants did provide insights and feedback thus meeting the event's intent.

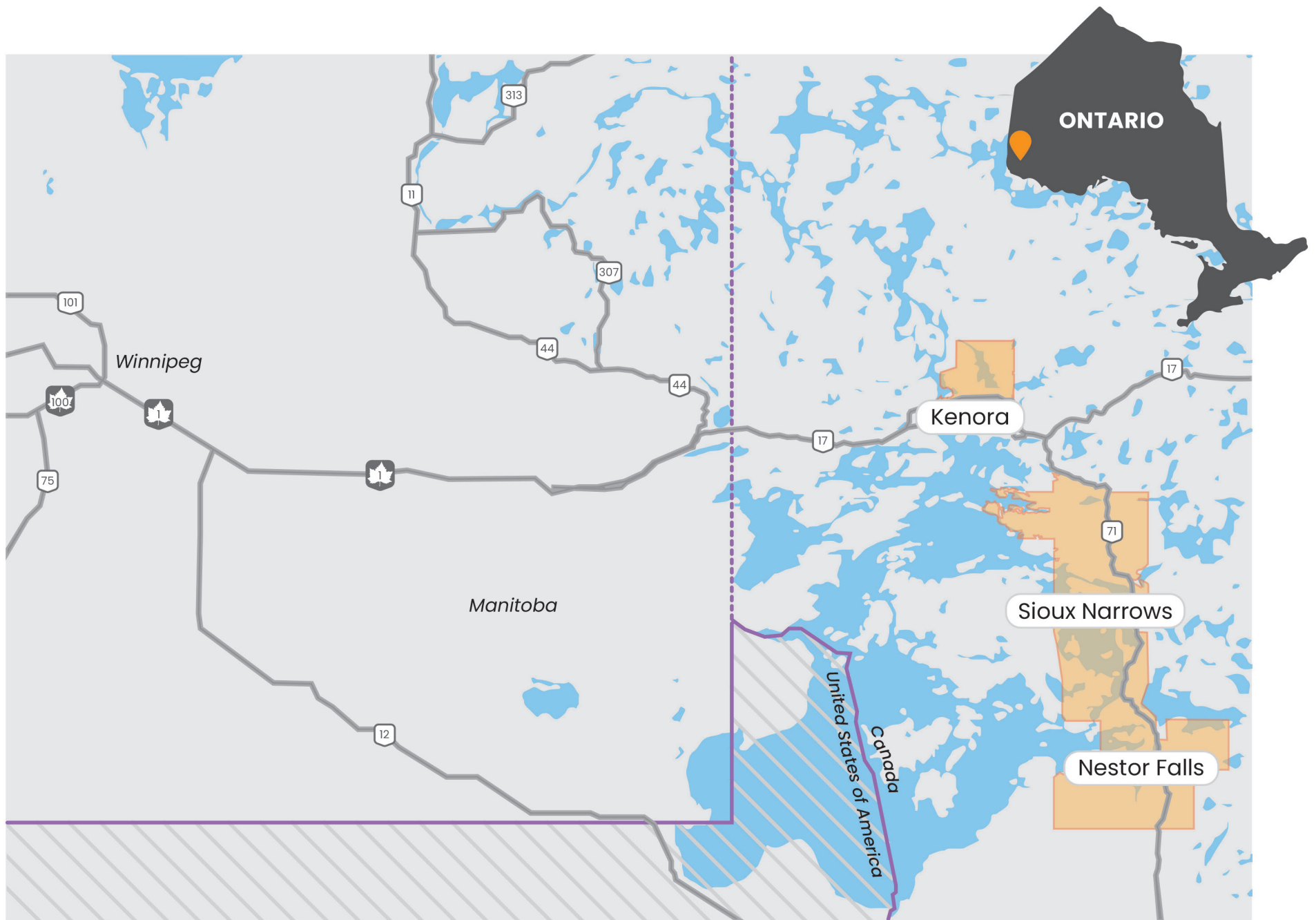
## 1.2 Community Context

Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls are located in Northwestern Ontario in the Treaty 3 area, on the shores of Lake of the Woods, one of the world's largest inland, freshwater lakes with over 14,000 islands and 65,000 miles of shoreline. They are approximately one hour apart by car, and share many of the same realities. Both have an engaged arts and culture sector, and are impacted annually by tourism, i.e. a high number of seasonal residents and tourists visiting from Manitoba, other parts of Ontario, and the United States who enjoy countless summer and winter activities. The communities are approximately 500 kilometres west of Thunder Bay, and approximately 200 kilometres east of Winnipeg, thus they have strong connections to Manitoba. The Trans-Canada Highway runs directly through Kenora, and Highway 71 provides access to Minnesota. The area is well-served by Kenora's regional airport.

The Town of Kenora (then called Rat Portage) was incorporated in 1882. In 1905, its name was changed from Rat Portage to Kenora by combining the first two letters of the communities of Keewatin, Norman and Rat Portage (Barnes 1955, 22). The communities were not amalgamated/merged at that time. In 2000, Kenora, Keewatin and Jaffray Melick were amalgamated into the City of Kenora. In 2016 the City of Kenora had a population of 15,096 and the wider Kenora District, which spans all the way to the Hudson Bay, had a population of 65,533.<sup>1</sup> Kenora immediately abuts three Ojibwe–Anishinaabe First Nation Reserves, including Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation (Dalles No. 38C) to the northwest, Obashkaandagaang Bay First Nation (Rat Portage No. 38A) to the southwest, and the Anishinabe of Wauzhushk Onigum (Kenora No. 38B) to the southeast, and the local Métis population is represented by the Kenora Métis Council, a charter member of the Métis Nation of Ontario. Nearly 2,700 people, close to 18 percent of the City's population identify as being of Indigenous descent.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenora Community Profile 2018, City of Kenora Economic Development, pg.10



20km

Figure 1: Location of Kenora/Sioux Lookout-Nestor Falls





Figure 2: Lake of the Woods Arts Community – Art Fest 2017

The dominant language spoken in Kenora is English, with 14,780 residents reporting English as their language spoken most often at home, with only 35 reporting French and 180 listing non-official languages, primarily Ojibwe.<sup>2</sup>

Kenora has historically been known for its dominant forestry industry; however with the sector's decline in the mid-2000s, it focused on diversifying its economy stimulated through major investments in public sector infrastructure projects including a multi-phase downtown revitalization initiative. A central feature is the Whitecap Pavilion which Great Places in Canada describes as "... a state of the art tensile structure... All year the tent hosts a variety of shows, markets, festivals, competitions, expos, fundraisers and acts as a general 'let's get together' space ...".<sup>3</sup> The City is now in the process of developing a new destination brand.<sup>4</sup>

Kenora has a long history as a crossroads of cultures and as a trading place. There are numerous sites of archaeological value including pictographs and petroglyphs as well as built heritage sites. The city is home to a variety of artists, arts groups, creative businesses, heritage sites, libraries, museums, a visual art centre, a community arts hub, pow-wows, summer music festivals and concert series, and special events. Notably, Lake of the Woods Arts Community, the Kenora District Festival of the Arts, and Lake of the Woods Concert Group. Arts, culture, and heritage activities in Kenora are created, rehearsed, presented, and exhibited through a combination of private studios, purpose-built buildings, land-based and public space activation, and repurposing non-arts-specific spaces. For example, Kenora is known for its Heritage Townscape Murals, a collection of 21 murals around the city painted by a variety of Canadian artists.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, 2012

<sup>3</sup> [https://greatplacesincanada.ca/gpic\\_places/the-whitecap-pavilion](https://greatplacesincanada.ca/gpic_places/the-whitecap-pavilion)

<sup>4</sup> Kenora Community Profile 2018, City of Kenora Economic Development, pg. 6

The City has directly invested in two important pieces of cultural infrastructure – the Lake of the Woods Museum (est. 1964, with new facility built in 1986) and the Douglas Family Art Centre (est. and built 2019). Federal, provincial and private sector capital investment built the Douglas Family Art Centre with the City providing operational financial support. In terms of planning, there is a 2007 Performing Arts Conference Centre and Downtown Opportunities Study (City of Kenora) and a 2011 Municipal Cultural Plan for the City of Kenora. The 2019 Harbourfront Business Development Plan, a master plan for the harbourfront, is designed to be a festival destination through collaboration with local artists and cultural institutions. In particular, it outlines a future Gathering Circle and Picnic area, a place where *“... we celebrate the twenty-eight First Nations of Treaty 3 and the Métis Nation, who signed an adhesion to the treaty in 1874-75.”*<sup>5</sup>

Indirect support includes incentives in the form of grants and incremental tax incentives for a number of business improvement and housing development areas in three Community Improvement Plans (CIPs). The CIPs affect the arts and culture sector through the promotion of revitalization and place-making to attract tourism, business investment, and economic development opportunities, enhancement of streetscapes and building façades, and effective use of community infrastructure.

Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls has approximately 1,000 residents in the winter months and more than 5,000 in the summer. The main industry is tourism and there are over sixty customer service facilities offering a wide range of retail, hospitality, personal, financial, emergency and other services.<sup>6</sup> There is a library with branches in each community that acts as a community hub.

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5 Kenora Harbourfront Business Development Plan Final 2019, pg. 24

6 2015 Community Profile, Township of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, pg. 6

There are four First Nations communities that closely neighbour or are immediately adjacent to Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls: Naothkamegwaning, Ojibways of Onigaming, Animakee Wa Zhing #37, and Northwest Angle #33. There are both Métis and First Nations residents of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls. Seventy people, close to 13 percent of the Township’s population identify as being of Indigenous ancestry.<sup>7</sup> The dominant language spoken in Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls is English, with 525 residents reporting English as their language spoken most often at home, with only 10 reporting French and 30 listing non-official languages, primarily various Indo-European languages.<sup>8</sup>

The area, originally home to Objwe and Cree nations, became part of the fur trade route between Kenora and Rainy River. The surrounding area was mined for gold between 1895 and 1900 on a full time basis and then intermittently, followed by the boom-bust cycle of logging camps and mining. Accessible initially by boats or winter roads, the area became more densely populated once Highway 71 was built, fueling the outdoor tourism industry.<sup>9</sup>

The Township’s Strategic Plan 2019–2023 and Community Improvement Plan (2020) outline continued municipal investment in the arts and culture sector through financial incentives for property improvements and heritage buildings, and support for programs such as the Moose n’ Fiddle music festival at Caliper Lake Provincial Park, the Bridge and Falls Creative Residency, a six day, self-guided artist in residence program housed in tiny studios, and the publication of the Bridge & Falls Summer Visitors Guide.

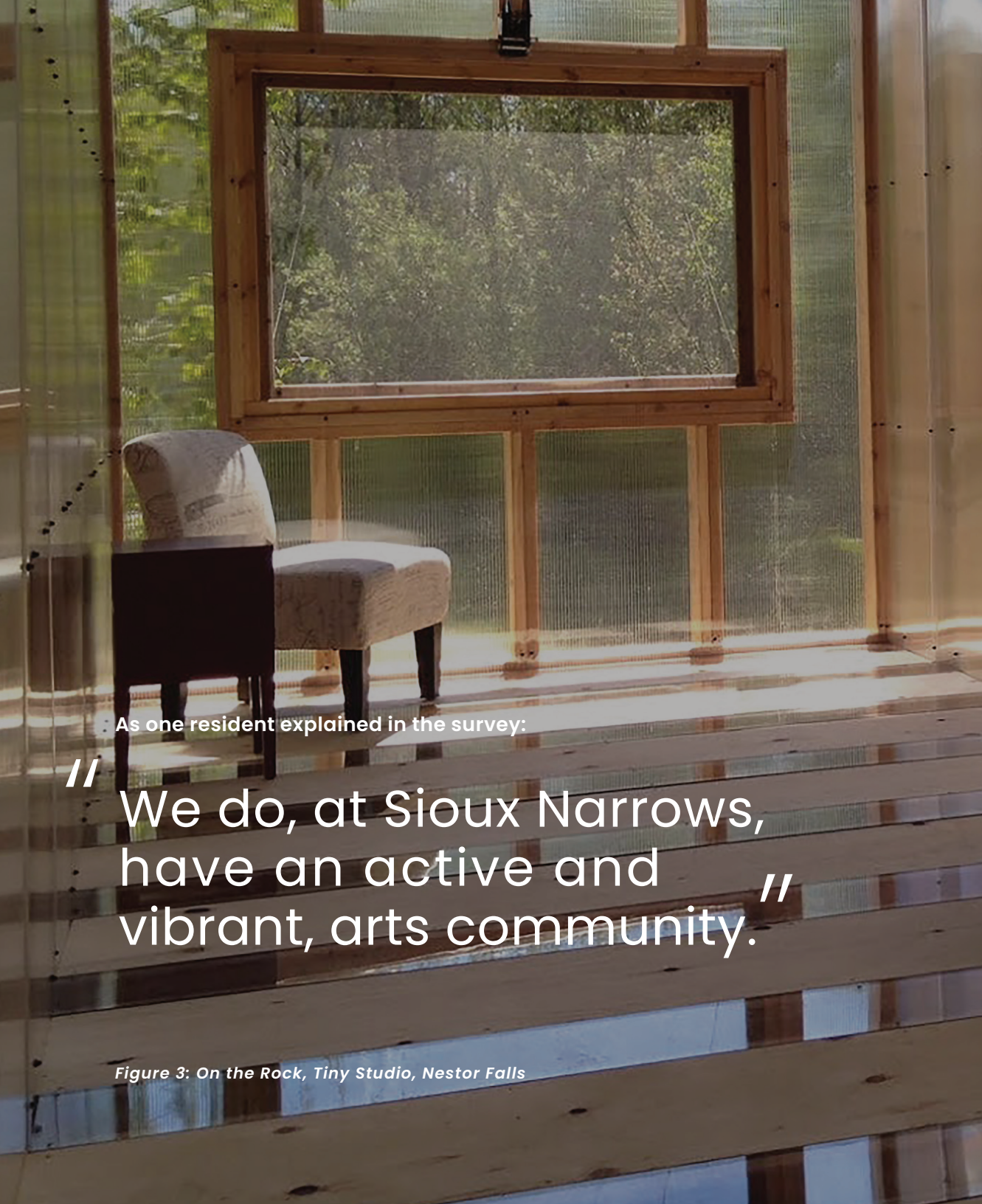
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7 Statistics Canada, 2016

8 Statistics Canada, 2016

9 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sioux\\_Narrows-Nestor\\_Falls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sioux_Narrows-Nestor_Falls).



A photograph of a tiny studio with a large window and a chair. The window is made of wood and has a view of a lush green forest. A white armchair is positioned in front of the window. The floor is made of wooden planks. The walls are also made of wood. The overall atmosphere is warm and cozy.

*"There too is strong support from [the] local municipal government. Though financial resources are limited, much has already been developed as far as creative spaces and opportunities for creatives to enjoy our local community."*

*We do have two permanent 'tiny studios' that are available on a juried art residency program managed by the Township [Bridge & Falls Creative Residency], as well as opportunities to exhibit at the Northern Ontario Sportfishing Centre public cultural space. The 50 plus Centre with and without partnerships through the Sioux Narrows Arts Council offers multi-disciplinary arts and crafts workshops year-round. There is also a small private, but open to the public, space where local art is both displayed and for sale, at the Vilij Well/Iron & Clay Coffee Shop. The art community here, as said, is strong and active, and the municipality is highly supportive of activities and events, but there is [a] limit to what the municipality can both offer and afford. Where the municipality leaves off, volunteerism takes over (and, really, drives the initiatives)."*

*– (Survey Participant)*

As one resident explained in the survey:

*// We do, at Sioux Narrows, have an active and vibrant, arts community. //*


*Figure 3: On the Rock, Tiny Studio, Nestor Falls*





# 2.0

## Community Profile



The report is organized into three sections: Current Space and Identified Needs, Community Contributions, Acquiring or Developing Creative Space and Sustaining Creative Space, followed by a summary which includes 'next steps'.

## 2.1 Respondents

The survey respondents are from the combined area of Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls. Although the responses are not a comprehensive representation of the artistic and creative community with regards to creative space, the partners have advised that the responses are reflective of their understanding of the community and thus provide a reasonable snapshot of its current status and perspectives.

*Total number of respondents: 39 individuals, 11 organizations*

**Table 1: Age of Respondents**

Age	Individuals	Organizational Representatives
16–20	1	0
21–30	3	0
31–40	3	2
41–50	7	2
51–60	3	3
61–70	13	2
71+	5	0

*35 of 39 individuals responded / 9 of 11 organizations responded*

As typical in the arts, culture and heritage sector, individual respondents in the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area represent a wide range of ages indicating interest in the sector across various life stages. Those completing the survey on behalf of an organization represent a slightly older demographic, which is also common in the sector. The data does not mean that younger people are not playing a significant role individually and/or within organizations through and a range of capacities inducing leadership (volunteer or employed), but rather only that no one in these age brackets participated in the survey.





“ [Our space] is the cultural heart of our community. It provides much needed visual art & heritage exhibition space. It unites the diverse groups within our community.”

– (survey participant)

Figure 4: Lake of the Woods Museum, Kenora



## 2.2 Community Contributions

The existence of cultural infrastructure (e.g., creative spaces) by its very nature provides opportunities to engage in creative expression for pleasure, social connection and/or economic benefit, creating a social milieu. Creative space 'anchors' serve local residents and visitors through employment, resources, and spending, providing the community access points to engage in the arts, meet role models, and exchange goods in a sector that typically otherwise has low visibility. Essentially, creative space is an enabler; a foundational component of the arts and culture ecology. It facilitates engaging in the production of cultural goods for a variety of socioeconomic purposes. As such, it plays an integral role in the sector's functionality and flow in two foundational streams:

- i) the continuum of creative processes and products to the circulation of goods (e.g. for personal use, gifts to others, or for selling in the marketplace); and,
- ii) its connectivity: the formation of networks and relationships that build capacity and cohesion, and linkages between producers, consumers, policy and decision-makers, and the general public that underpin a sense of community, foster localized creative economies, and thus, sector sustainability.

Creative spaces support individual, interpersonal, and community development by facilitating life-long learning opportunities, engagement and reflection, and expressions of identity. Engagement in artistic activities build resilience-related characteristics including increased complex problem-solving skills, divergent, lateral thinking, and artistic, technical, and business skills that spill over and are incorporated into other aspects of one's life, or are transferable to other domains. These spillover benefits increase individual and community adaptive capacity, and broader community resilience (Brault, 2005; Cooley, 2003; Savory-Gordon, 2003, Sacco, 2011). In the North, given the part-time nature of creative practice there is a potentially large spillover effect into 'day jobs' further generating resilience as artists carry on their daily routines and businesses (Ortiz and Broad, 2007). Arts and culture are also a critical part of fostering youth development and a sense of belonging in their community, and contribute to retaining these youth as they mature, or even draws them back after they finish education somewhere else (Duxbury and Campbell, 2009; Markusen, 2013).

Data from community contributions are divided into three subsections. The first highlights participants' perceptions of the benefits their spaces are providing to the community, and the second, the opportunities existing creative spaces are providing the Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls area. It is followed by two subsections focused on formalized recognition: acknowledgements, recognition and certifications; and, media coverage.

### 2.2.1

#### Engagement, Learning, Connectivity and Development

// *My space fills a creative niche within the community, allowing people to participate in a craft they may otherwise not have access to. My space adds creative value to the culture of my community, making it more attractive to locals/visitors/tourists. My space is community building, in that it is a place to gather, learn and create //*

– (Survey participant)



Individual respondents noted several ways in which the area's creative space is contributing to a range of activities and thus benefits. Specifically, physical space can host teaching and learning activities, are currently suitable for the chosen art form, and have some technology and equipment for rent or use. This provides an earned revenue stream and practical support to the creative community.

Organizational creative spaces are currently supporting more activities than individual spaces, especially in the areas of affordable use of space, co-production opportunities, access to discipline-based mentors, physical accessibility, networking, innovative use, visioning/experimentation, and Indigenous knowledge.

The data indicates space plays a key role in fostering creative skills, artistic capacity, cross-cultural understanding, and community development—important contributions to health and well-being, identity and belonging, and localized creative economies, and thus resilience.

**Table 2: Engagement, Learning, Connectivity and Development**

	Individuals	Organizational Representatives
Access to discipline-based mentors	0	3
Affordable use of space	0	4
Co-production opportunities	0	3
Incubator space for visioning or experimentation	0	2
Innovative use of space	0	2
Networking	0	2
Physically accessible space	0	2
Suitable space for a particular art form	3	3
Teaching and learning opportunities	3	3
Technology and equipment to rent or use	1	1
Understanding of Indigenous knowledge in artistic craft/space	0	2

*3 of 39 individuals responded / 5 of 11 organizations responded*



Figure 5: Fence painting activity, Sioux Narrows Arts Council

When asked to identify the three greatest contributions that their creative space provides the community, individual respondents shared a variety of examples of how their spaces are integral to the area's quality of life. They are important places of engagement, learning, and connectivity where artists support each other and the general public, as well as contribute to the economy as tourism products. Following is a sampling of individuals' responses underscoring the role creative spaces play in shaping identity and creating a sense of place.

Individuals noted:

- Allows me to mentor other artists, teach, and perform
- Enables me to provide workshops in a variety of visual mediums
- Provides opportunities for dialogue with other artists, share and produce art, and instruct
- Space that provides camaraderie, inspires and opportunities to learn with others
- Provides workshops, tools and materials, allowing people to participate without a significant investment in tools and equipment
- Engages tourists in art, and raises awareness of the environment
- Enables me to create paintings of this area to be shipped worldwide as well sold locally



Mentoring is a primary source of knowledge and professional development (artistic, technical and business skills) that is key to maintaining and advancing practice due to the region's limited opportunities for arts education (Ortiz, 2017 p. 178).

When organizations were asked about the three greatest contributions of their creative spaces, they also provided striking examples of how they are places of learning, capacity building affordable space, as well as a range of engagement opportunities and cultural tourism.

Organizations noted:

- Creates a welcoming space... A non-judgmental approach... a place where assumptions and stigmas are deconstructed
- Supports community development and cultural tourism
- Provides incubator spaces
- Provides affordable retail space for regional artists
- Provides consumers and those interested in viewing regional art with free opportunities to engage
- Provides access to instructional materials and professional artists
- Provides dance education, physical activity, arts and expression



Figure 6: Adult painting activity, Sioux Narrows Arts Council

## 2.2.2 Community Recognition

*// I think it is important that Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls is recognized for its outstanding artistic community. The volunteer and municipal groups should be recognized and receive more support. Individual artists, cooperatives and organizations all contribute time and money to deliver health and wellness, financial, social, emotional and lifelong learning opportunities to residents of all ages through the arts programming. Home of the longest running Arts Festival of its kind in Northwestern Ontario, run by over 100 volunteers. Hundreds of artists in our little community. Check us out. //*

– Survey participant

Community recognition raises awareness of the sector's offerings locally and beyond its borders. It instills pride and a sense of community, playing a role in attracting residents, tourists, and visiting artists, fostering cultural tourism. It highlights the locale's role models and best practices, building capacity in the field.



### 2.2.3

## Acknowledgments, Recognition, or Certifications

Awards, prizes, certifications, memberships, peer recognition, and government recognition are a few examples of the type of recognition included in this section.

In the last five years, individuals and organizations have received acknowledgments, recognition, or certifications.

#### **GEOGRAPHIC REACH**

- Local: 2 individuals; 2 organizations
- Regional: 2 individuals; 2 organizations
- Provincial: 1 individual; 1 organization
- National: 1 organization

Six individuals and two organizations indicate that this category is not applicable.

#### **SECTOR**

- Arts: 2 individuals; 1 organization
- Community Development: 1 individual; 1 organization
- Culture: 1 individual; 2 organizations
- Business: 1 individual
- Black, People of Colour: 1 organization
- Environment: 1 individual

## 2.2.4

### Media Coverage

In many northern communities media attention is increasingly difficult to gain due to the loss of local newspapers and reporters. Social media is replacing some aspects of promotion, however, critical writing and a journalistic approach to coverage is an important component of sector appreciation, professional development and engagement.

When asked if survey participants received any media coverage for their creative space in the past five years, 24% of respondents indicated yes. Specifically, six individuals and two organizations received media coverage at least once in the past five years, and one individual and two organizations were featured more than twice within the same time period.

This media coverage was not limited to the local Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area. In fact, both individuals and organizations noted that their creative spaces received community recognition at provincial, national, and international levels, as well as in the Indigenous community which transcends colonial borders.

The study illustrates that respondents are aware of the community benefits that their creative spaces provide, and are receiving acknowledgements and media attention beyond local borders, indicating a high level of programming and quality cultural products.

**Table 3: Media Coverage Reach**

Media Coverage	Individuals	Organizations
Indigenous Community (including across colonial borders)	0	1
International	1	0
Local	5	4
National	1	1
Provincial	1	1
Regional	2	3

*7 of 39 individuals responded / 5 of 11 organizations responded*

## 2.3 Current Space and Identified Needs

This section reports data gathered from survey participants when asked to provide information regarding their current status in relationship to space from a number of perspectives such as artistic disciplines, disciplines and activities currently offered, future aspirations, and the type of space needed to meet these goals.

### 2.3.1 Current Space Scenarios

To identify respondents' current situation regarding creative space, one of the survey provided five scenarios asking respondents to identify which one best suited their situation.

**Table 4: Current Space Scenarios**

Respondent Scenarios	Individuals	Organizations
Owens, operates and/or manages creative space	24	6
Audience	Individuals	Organizations
For private or organizational needs	21	1
Open to the public	3	5
Alignment of Needs & Assets	Individuals	Organizations
Open to the public and could or does have short term renters and/or tenants	3	5
Do not have creative space but want it	10	3

*35 of 39 individuals responded / 9 of 11 organizations responded*

While 24 (or 62%) individual respondents and 6 (or 55%) organizations have creative space, 10 individuals and 3 organizations indicate they do not have creative space and that they want it. (For further information about respondents' space preferences see the section titled [Acquiring and Developing Creative Space, page 41](#)).

Of the respondents who own, lease and/or manage creative space, three individuals and five organizations indicate there is space within their existing buildings that could provide others short term rentals or tenants. This suggests some of existing space could be explored to determine if it meets the needs of those who are currently seeking it and/or others in the community who may become interested in having space once aware of the opportunity.

### 2.3.2 Disciplines and Activities

*// The Douglas Art Centre, Arts Hub  
and Inglenook Studio are three  
great creative spaces in Kenora. //*

– (Survey participant)

This section compares individuals' current creative practice, i.e., the disciplines and activities they currently offer in their creative spaces, and what they would like to offer in the future. From an organizational perspective, it illustrates what disciplines and activities are currently being offered in their spaces and identifies ones they would like to provide in the future.



**Table 5.a: Current Practice and Future Activities**

Artistic or Cultural Practice	Individuals			Organizations	
	Practice	Current	Future	Current	Future
Circus	0	0	2	1	2
Community Arts	4	1	5	3	5
Craft Arts	2	2	4	4	4
Dance	0	0	3	1	5
Film	1	0	0	0	0
Heritage	1	0	4	2	4
Literary	0	1	3	4	5
Mixed-media	2	0	3	2	4
Multi-disciplinary	1	0	3	3	5
Music	4	0	5	3	5
Performance	3	0	4	2	5
Theatre	4	0	4	2	5
Visual Arts	8	3	5	5	4

*Disciplines – 18 of 39 individuals responded*

*Current – 14 of 39 individuals responded / Future – 23 of 39 individuals responded*

*Current – 6 of 11 organizations responded / Future – 7 of 11 organizations responded*

**Table 5.b: Current Practice and Future Activities**

Activities	Individuals		Organizations	
	Current	Future	Current	Future
Cafe	0	0	0	0
Classes, Mentoring	5	0	1	0
Client meeting space	0	0	2	0
Creative collaborative space	0	0	3	0
Cultural activities	0	0	2	0
Exhibition space	2	0	2	0
Gathering, public educational space	5	0	2	0
Retail space	3	0	3	0
Other: art camps and workshops	0	0	0	0
Other: creation space, online communication	1	0	0	0
Other: vocal; outdoor artisan and craft market, spring to fall	0	0	0	2

*Disciplines – 18 of 39 individuals responded*

*Current – 14 of 39 individuals responded / Future – 23 of 39 individuals responded*

*Current – 6 of 11 organizations responded / Future – 7 of 11 organizations responded*

Individuals were first asked to indicate the areas of disciplines in which they engage, revealing a diversity of practices with a very strong emphasis on visual arts, followed by a particular focus on community arts, music, theatre and performance. When compared to what programming they are currently offering in their creative spaces, however, considerably fewer disciplines are cited. The disciplines and activities they identify offering in the future show a more parallel vision of fulfilling their artistic capacity.

The gap between current practices and current offerings may be due to a number of factors such as space, teacher training, and /or business development skills that could include marketing, registration and payment gateways, time restrictions that limit many Northern artists (Ortiz, 2017). Some of Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls artistic challenges are identified in section [2.6.1 Capacity and Advancement, page 47](#).

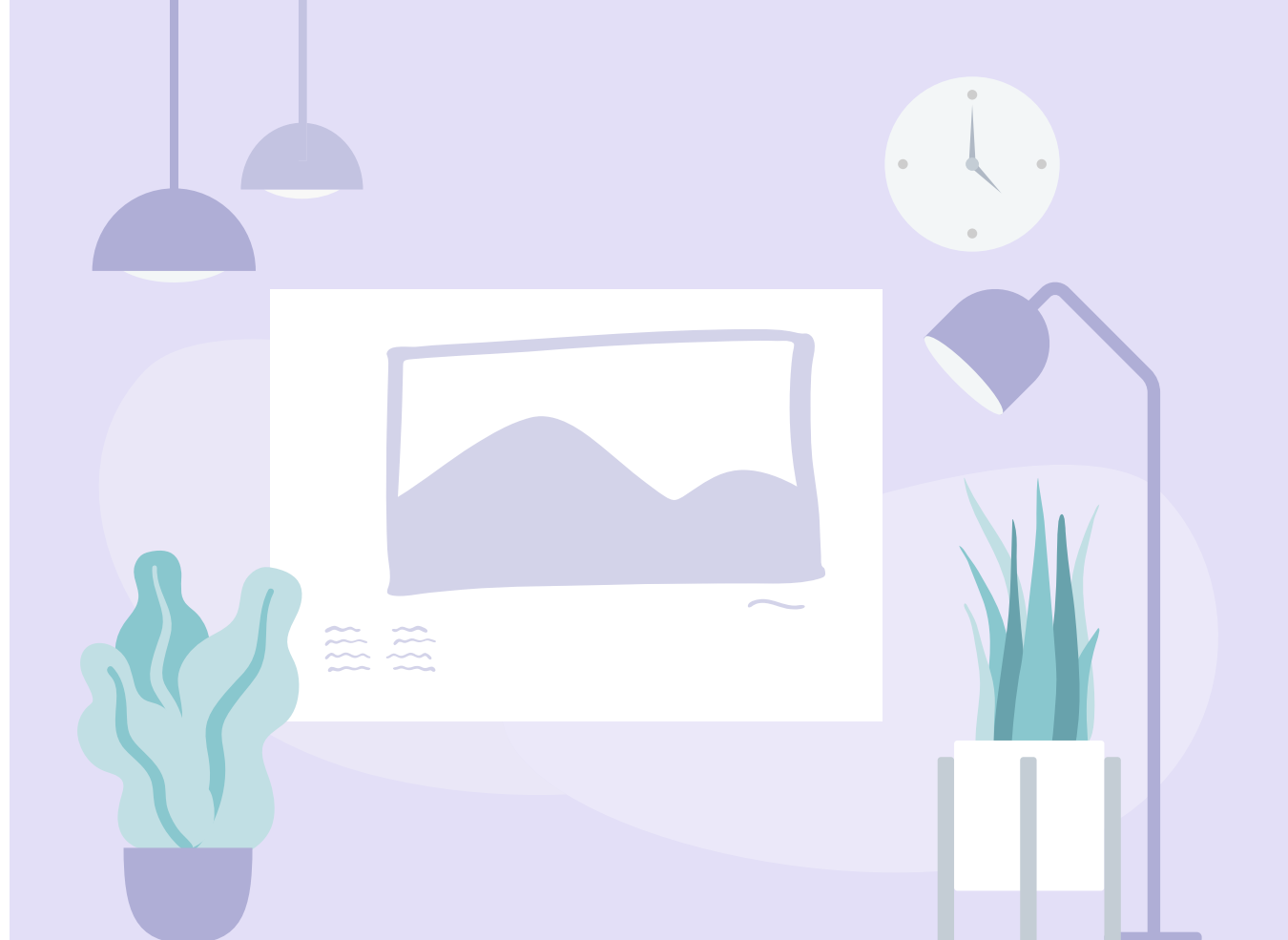


Figure 7: Community Performance, Lake of the Woods Museum

The current activities of existing creative spaces in Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls are slightly different depending on if it is an individual creative space or one operated by an organization. Individual creative spaces function primarily as places for gathering, teaching, mentoring, retail, and exhibition for those working in the visual or craft arts. Organizational creative spaces function primarily as places for collaboration, gathering, meeting, retail, and exhibition for a variety of disciplines. These include visual arts, craft arts, literary, music, theatre, dance, heritage, and mixed-media. There is also more of an emphasis on community arts among organizational creative spaces.

Individual and organizational respondents have similar responses regarding the activities of future creative spaces. Both groups note the need for spaces that function as places for community and multi-disciplinary arts activities, specifically in the performing arts (music, theatre, dance). Respondents also want to see creative spaces offer more activities in the areas of visual arts, craft arts, literary, heritage, and mixed-media.

### 2.3.3 Creative Space Needs



Although the existing creative spaces are positively contributing to Kenora's and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls' quality of life and community economic well-being, study participants identified a need for more and/or upgraded creative space, and the type that is needed to further strengthen the community. Space needs fall into two categories: (a) those who do not have space and (b) those whose space is not meeting current needs.

It is important to note that those who responded to the following questions are not offering to accommodate these unmet needs. This subsection highlights what they would like offered in the future. What they would like to and/or intend to offer is reported in the section titled [Disciplines and Activities, page 22](#).



**NEED FOR MORE CREATIVE SPACE:**

When specifically asked if respondents thought there is a need for more creative space:



56% or 28 of 50 total respondents indicated a need for more creative spaces in the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area.



54% of individuals (21 of 39 respondents)



64% of organizations (7 of 11 respondents)

**DO NOT HAVE CREATIVE SPACE:**

A number of respondents indicate they do not have creative space, and noted their preference for private or public space, leased or owned, and within a city or town rather than rural location.



26% or 13 of 50 total respondents say that they do not currently have a creative space.



26% of individuals (10 of 39 respondents)



27% of organizations (3 of 11 respondents)

The respondents who do not have space and want it indicated the following preferences.

**PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SPACE:**

- Individuals:
  - » Private: 3
  - » Public: 7
- Organizations:
  - » Private: 0
  - » Public: 3

**LEASED OR OWNED SPACE**

- Individuals:
  - » Lease: 1
  - » Own: 0
  - » No Preference: 6
- Organizations:
  - » Lease: 3
  - » Own: 0
  - » No Preference: 0

**CITY/ TOWN OR RURAL LOCATION**

- Individuals:
  - » City/Town: 4
  - » Rural: 0
- Organizations:
  - » City/Town: 3
  - » Rural: 0

## TYPE OF SPACE NEEDED

Both respondents — those with existing space and those who are seeking creative space — underscore that any upgraded or new creative space in their communities should be designed to meet particular needs. The priority area is retail space, followed by private studios suitable for specific disciplines, with a strong need for performance and exhibition spaces and multi-disciplinary hubs, as well as rehearsal and administrative spaces, and a drop-in arts space for youth.

**Table 6: Type of Space Needed**

Space	Individuals	Organizations
Administrative space	5	1
Exhibition/Gallery space	11	2
Multi-Disciplinary Hubs	12	4
Performance space	12	7
Private studio suitable for specific disciplines	13	5
Rehearsal space	8	5
Retail space	20	5
Other: Outdoor spaces amphitheatre, event tent, market stands; all of these need to be affordable	2	0
Other: Youth drop in for arts and music	N/A	2

*20 of 39 individuals responded / 8 of 11 organizations responded*

Specific survey participants comments regarding the need for places for young people to gather include:

*// We need a place open to meet. Lots of young professionals and business owners want to get together for art and music but there's no designated gathering spot for it. //*

*// There is no place in [Sioux Narrows] for younger artists to get together any more. [I] went to [an] arts workshop at the senior's centre. [At] night after work nothing is open in the town except the bar... the town needs to do more to support the locals with [an] art hub. //*

One respondent indicated the need for gallery space dedicated to specific media:

*// We need a gallery space exclusive to photographers where people can see and purchase one's work. //*

### 2.3.4

## Creative Space Not Meeting Needs

When asked if their creative space is meeting their needs, nine individuals say that their current creative space does not meet their needs.

Two key areas of improvement include:

- Upgrading size (larger, more space to hold more participants), and
- Functionality (more shelves, storage, natural light; better plumbing; improved organization of space/ layout; better equipment).

No organization responded to this question.

The study did not seek to determine whether or not the respondents intend to undertake any action to address these shortcomings. Please see the section on [Developing Creative Space: Capital Plans](#), page 43.

### 2.3.5

## Creative Space Meeting Needs

A few individuals and one organization indicate their current space is meeting their needs in the areas listed in the chart below. This is by no means an exhaustive list in determining whether or not the creative space is meeting participant needs, but does include a few key benchmarks.

**Table 7: Creative Space Meeting Needs**

Needs	Individuals	Organizations
Affordability	7	1
Ease of Access	7	1
Size	5	0
Suitability	5	0
Other: home contains needed equipment	2	N/A

*9 of 39 individuals responded / 1 of 11 organizations responded*

Study participants indicate that existing creative spaces are providing access and opportunity to engage in the sector, contributing to social cohesion, education and community economic development. There is, however, a desire and need for more space to utilize artists current creative capacity and to meet individual and organizational goals of furthering participation. They also identify the type of new space they are seeking and preferences for such in terms of leasing or owning. A few respondents noted there is space within their building that could potentially be rented or leased.



## 2.4 Operations



*Figure 8: Douglas Family Art Centre, Kenora*

In the arts and culture sector, creative spaces are managed by a variety of operating models, depending on the human resource capacity, location, physical design, and users of the space. How an individual, group, or organization manages its creative space is a unique decision based on the needs and abilities of its people and finances.

This section provides an overview of the operational status and capacity of the existing creative spaces in Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls. The study includes organizational lifespan, management structure, facility management, revenue, operating hours, demographic engagement, recurring engagement, and barriers to accessing creative space.

2.4.1  
Organizational Lifespan

Sustaining a non-profit organization over a long period of time is extremely challenging in all areas of operation (e.g. funding, human resources, volunteers, audience development, marketing, changing demographics and political interests). Long-standing ‘anchor’ organizations serve as role models, fostering, mentoring and/or advising new groups or individuals as well as providing critical opportunities for citizens and tourists to engage in the arts and culture sector, thus contributing to community identity and quality of life over time.

Table 8: Organizational Lifespan

Years in Operation	5-9	10-14	20-29	40-49	50+
Number of Organizations	1	1	2	2	3

9 of 11 organizations responded

The data indicates Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls are home to several long-operating artistic/creative organizations, a testament to the on-going importance of creative expression bolstered by collective passion, perseverance and community engagement. Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls have organizations that have many years of operating experience, seven have been in existence for more than 20 years. This amount of time indicates that these organizations have operating and community engagement experience as well as administrative capacity that has continued through leadership, generational, and societal changes. They can be considered anchor organizations in the community.

## 2.4.2

### Management Structure

Although none of the respondents indicated their management structure is a collective or Ad-Hoc Group, survey participants who do not have space and are seeking such note they would be open to a collaborative solution, and would be willing or at least interested in partnering with others to purchase, rent and/or build a creative space. (See [Acquiring or Developing Creative Space, page 41](#)).

The study also reveals that these creative spaces are run by a mix of staff, volunteers or a mix of both, highlighting again the variety of community experience to operate creative spaces. The survey did not identify the number of employment or volunteer opportunities or the reasons for operating with such. No individuals responded to this question.

Those responding to the survey indicated their creative spaces are privately owned, rather than leased. It is unknown if there is a lack of leasing opportunities or if people simply did not respond.

**Table 9: Management Structure**

Governance Structure	Individuals	Organizations
Charitable Corporation	N/A	1
Co-operative	N/A	1
Collective or Ad-Hoc Group	N/A	N/A
Not-For-Profit Corporation	N/A	1
Personnel	Individuals	Organizations
Staff-run	N/A	3
Volunteer-run	N/A	1
Mix of Volunteer and Staff-Run	N/A	1
Ownership	Individuals	Organizations
Privately Owned (Sole Proprietorship or Partnership)	3	1
Tenant	0	0

*3 of 39 individuals responded / 5 of 11 organizations responded*

### 2.4.3

## Facility Management Experience

Of the few people who responded, the data shows there are individuals and organizations with experience owning, leasing, or managing a creative space in Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls, which is a valuable local capacity and knowledge base for existing spaces as well as those looking to acquire or develop creative space in the future.

**Table 10: Years Owning, Leasing, or Managing a Creative Space**

	Individuals	Organizations
Less than 1 year	0	0
1-4 years	0	0
5-10 years	2	2
More than 10 years	1	3

*3 of 39 individual responded / 5 of 11 organizations responded*



## 2.4.4

### Revenue

Creative spaces can be funded in a variety of ways, and revenue diversification is a key element of sustainability. The following chart lists a number of revenue streams typical in the arts, culture and heritage sectors.

**Table 11: Revenue Sources**

Revenue Sources	Individuals	Organizations
Admission fees	0	2
Bank Loan	0	0
Donations	0	2
Facility or equipment rental	1	1
Federal government operating grant	0	1
Federal government project grant	0	1
Food/beverage	0	0
Fundraising	0	2
Government loan	0	0
Indigenous government loan	0	1
Membership fees	0	1
Municipal government operating grant	0	2
Municipal government project grant	0	2
Provincial government operating grant	0	1
Provincial government project grant	1	2
Registration fees (classes, instruction, etc.)	2	1
Retail	3	3
Social enterprise	0	0
Ticket Sales	0	0
Other Loan	0	0

3 of 39 individuals responded / 4 of 11 organizations responded

The chart illustrates there are several revenue streams not being accessed by the respondents. This could be due to many factors including people declining to answer the question; availability of suitable opportunities; funding criteria; awareness of opportunities; and/or capacity (time or skill) to apply/access them. A few areas that would contribute to increasing revenue generating opportunities are identified in the section titled [Capacity and Advancement, page 47](#).

It is important to note, research indicates that funding models do not particularly favor northern artists (Ortiz, 2017, p.253). Current structures and criteria are developed primarily for southern Ontario's more urban and metropolitan centres and are not applicable and/or feasible given the region's population density, geographic expanse and development needs. Local and regional policies leading to more sustainable funding models responsive to the socioeconomic landscape and changing environment would strengthen creative capacity and sector viability. Longer-term investment enables strategic planning and sustainable practices that support meeting current and future community needs. Investment in the sector from public, private and broader community members would increase opportunities to engage in the arts for various socioeconomic reasons, which would consequently reap resilience benefits (Ortiz, 2017, p.253).

## 2.4.5

### Operating Hours

For this study, full-time hours were defined as over 20 hours per week. The chart illustrates many of the 31 individuals and 9 organizations who responded to this question are interested in increasing their hours.

**Table 12: Weekly Operating Hours and Future Goals**

Operating Hours	Individuals Current	Individuals Goal	Organizations Current	Organizations Goal
Less than 10 hours	4	6	1	3
10–20 hours	10	9	0	1
21–40 hours	5	10	3	3
41–60 hours	2	4	2	3
More than 60 hours	0	0	0	1

*31 of 39 individuals responded / 9 of 11 organizations responded*



## 2.4.6

### Demographic Engagement

// We are 'cottage country' ...  
cottagers from all over  
the world... many are artists. //

– (Survey participant)

Figure 9: Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls Moose N' Fiddle Festival



In recent years the tourism sector has seen a significant growth in cultural tourism, particularly experiential activities. A couple of respondents identified the important role the surrounding environment impacts their practice – one received recognition in the field, and another noted it as a community benefit, i.e. the engagement of tourists in art, raises the awareness of the environment. The area is home to a number of Indigenous communities that have strong cultural traditions that retain, preserve and promote traditional values and cultural distinctiveness. Immigration, including returning residents or citizens from within Canada, and people new to Canada, offer a diversity of perspectives and cultural norms. The arts sector is recognized for being an intercultural cultural bridge which can both strengthen these communities and foster connections between them.

While there is insufficient survey data to determine the current breakdown of demographic engagement, both individual and organizational respondents are most concerned with increasing the engagement of local and/or nearby residents, followed by seasonal area residents, and then tourists. The results indicate a strong commitment to creating a sense of community with year-round residents and those who spend longer time in the area.

**Table 13: Increasing Demographic Engagement**

Engagement	Individuals	Organizations
Local and/or nearby residents	2	4
Seasonal area residents (in the area for a length of time, but not year-round)	1	3
Tourists (short stay or passing through)	1	2

*3 of 39 individual responded / 4 of 11 organizations responded*

## 2.4.7

### Barriers to Accessing Creative Spaces

Barriers to accessibility are a recurring topic related to the development of creative spaces, especially in light of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) legislation requirements. Obstacles to accessibility could include geographical distance to spaces; limited transit options; and older infrastructure without accessible features such as ramps, automatic doors, and elevators.

When survey participants were asked if they thought there were transportation or physical barriers to accessing creative spaces in their community, few people answered the question. Three individuals stated they did not think there were accessibility barriers in their community; one organization noted there was a lack of personal and/or public transit and travel times/distances; and one organization indicated that their space did not accommodate people with disabilities.

## 2.4.8

### Recurring Engagement

Creative spaces designed for recurring engagement (i.e., repeat users) are places that can host rotating exhibitions, performances, classes, rehearsals, retail activities, public programming, etc. These spaces usually have an area to engage the public and provide basic services (such as washrooms), often have administrative and storage areas, and could have amenities such as parking. Sometimes they are consistent fixed places and sometimes they are pop-up locations.

In the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area survey participants indicate there are three individual and four organizational creative spaces designed for recurring engagement. One organization

notes they would like to attract repeat users in the future and can do so without any physical changes to the facility.

Although the response rate to this question was low, it does indicate there is ongoing engagement. This is critical to build communities of practice that deliver opportunities, and participants/audiences interested in further engaging in the sector.

The survey did not attempt to determine the type of offering (e.g. series of classes, exhibitions, one-time offerings) that attracted recurring engagement, or their demographics (for example, if they were residents or seasonal tourists, and/or ages).

In sum, this section reveals the area is home to a number of long-standing ‘anchor’ organizations, illustrating the importance of creative expression coupled with persistence and resilience in sustaining an operation through multiple organizational life cycles and shifting community contexts. The management structures are varied, offering the sector knowledge in these business models over a period of time, some with more than ten years experience. For those who responded to the questions, few revenue streams are being accessed, which may speak to suitability and/or availability of opportunities or to the need for support to tap into diverse investment streams. Whether or not there are barriers to accessing creative space remains somewhat undetermined. Local transportation may be an issue, and older buildings may not meet current code. There is an interest in expanding the weekly hours that creative spaces are open, as well as increasing demographic engagement, specifically, to attract more local residents, followed by seasonal tourists and to a lesser degree, tourists (those who are in the area for a length of time) and to a lesser degree, tourists described as those stay for a short period of time or are passing through. This speaks to an interest and commitment to the community.

## 2.5 Acquiring or Developing Creative Space

*// Kenora is a great community with a rich art community. The community needs more opportunities to expand either together or as separate ventures. //*

– (Survey participant)

Creative spaces can be acquired or developed through purchase and improvement, rent/lease and improvement, or through a purpose-built process. This section highlights data related to those interested in acquiring or developing creative space.

## 2.5.1

### Acquiring Creative Space

Acquiring creative space, especially on a longer-term basis as opposed to short-term rentals, is a major decision for individuals and organizations as it adds a level of administrative management that can be daunting. However, dedicated space is still essential to many in the arts, culture, and heritage sector, and more people are looking for innovative ways to fulfill their space goals. As such, the trend for acquiring creative space as a cooperative venture has been growing across Ontario.

#### PLANS TO ACQUIRE OR DEVELOP CREATIVE SPACE:

- 18% of respondents (9 of 50) are planning to acquire or develop a creative space in the next ten years.

#### OPTIONS FOR ACQUIRING CREATIVE SPACE:

Some respondents want to explore options other than single ownership or single leasing.

- 13% of individual respondents (5 of 39) see being located in a creative space with others as a collaborative solution to their space needs.
- 26% of all respondents (13 of 50) are willing or at least interested in partnering with others to purchase, rent, and/or build a creative space.

This indicates there are a number of individuals and organizations open to exploring collective management structure options which could include cooperatives and creative hubs.

One survey respondent expressed their interest stating,

*"I believe it would be beneficial to have many creative disciplines under one roof. This serves to inspire all in their endeavors."*

Participants could potentially connect with those organizations that indicated they have space for lease or rent. (See [Current Space Scenarios, page 21](#)).

Collaborative operating models, rather than individual ownership, have been gaining popularity over the past several years. One example of such is the creative hub. Canadian Heritage defines a creative hub as: *"a multi-tenant facility which brings together professionals from a range of arts or heritage sectors and creative disciplines. Creative hubs feature diverse business models, such as not-for-profit and for-profit organizations and self-employed creative workers. They provide multiple users with shared space, equipment and amenities; opportunities for idea exchange, collaboration and/or professional development; and offer space and programming that is accessible to the public."*<sup>10</sup> Communities can uniquely define what their creative hub includes and provides, which can range from co-working, studio spaces, performance, or supporting creative entrepreneurship. Please see [Appendix I: Resources, page 68](#) for examples in Toronto and Hearst.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund/application-guidelines.html#a25>



## 2.5.2

### Developing Creative Space: Capital Projects

A **capital project** is a long-term project to build, improve, maintain, or develop a capital asset.

A **capital asset** is a significant piece of property that the owner intends to hold and derive benefits from for a period of more than one year.

A **capital expense** can be a renovation and expense that extends the useful life of your property or improves it beyond its original condition.

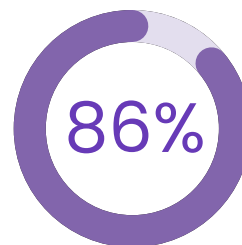
Creative space capital projects can be complicated, require significant financial and time investment, and are especially daunting if you have no experience with one. However, capital projects are an integral part of the life cycle of creative spaces, whether they develop the space in the first place or provide needed improvements to increase the efficacy of it.

Individual respondents specifically identified three main improvements that would help their existing creative spaces better meet community needs:

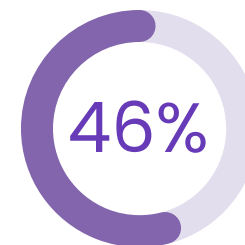
1. Larger space (to accommodate more teaching opportunities and participants)
2. Better organized and equipped space (light, shelving, amenities, separation)
3. Exhibition and retail space

These are capital projects of varying degrees of complexity and investment.

It is interesting to note, that although respondents recognize areas of improvement, the Survey demonstrates that when looking at the next five years:



of respondents (43 of 50)  
are not planning for a creative  
space capital project.



of respondents ( 23 of 50 )  
are not planning to develop  
or acquire a creative space.

The participants who identified they were not planning to develop or acquire creative space noted financial and time cost, as well as access to local capital and real estate. One organization felt that their creative space already meets their needs, and one organization recently completed a capital project. The reasons cited align with the following section that identifies areas that contribute to difficulties in developing or maintaining creative space.

### 2.5.3 Developing Creative Space: Considerations

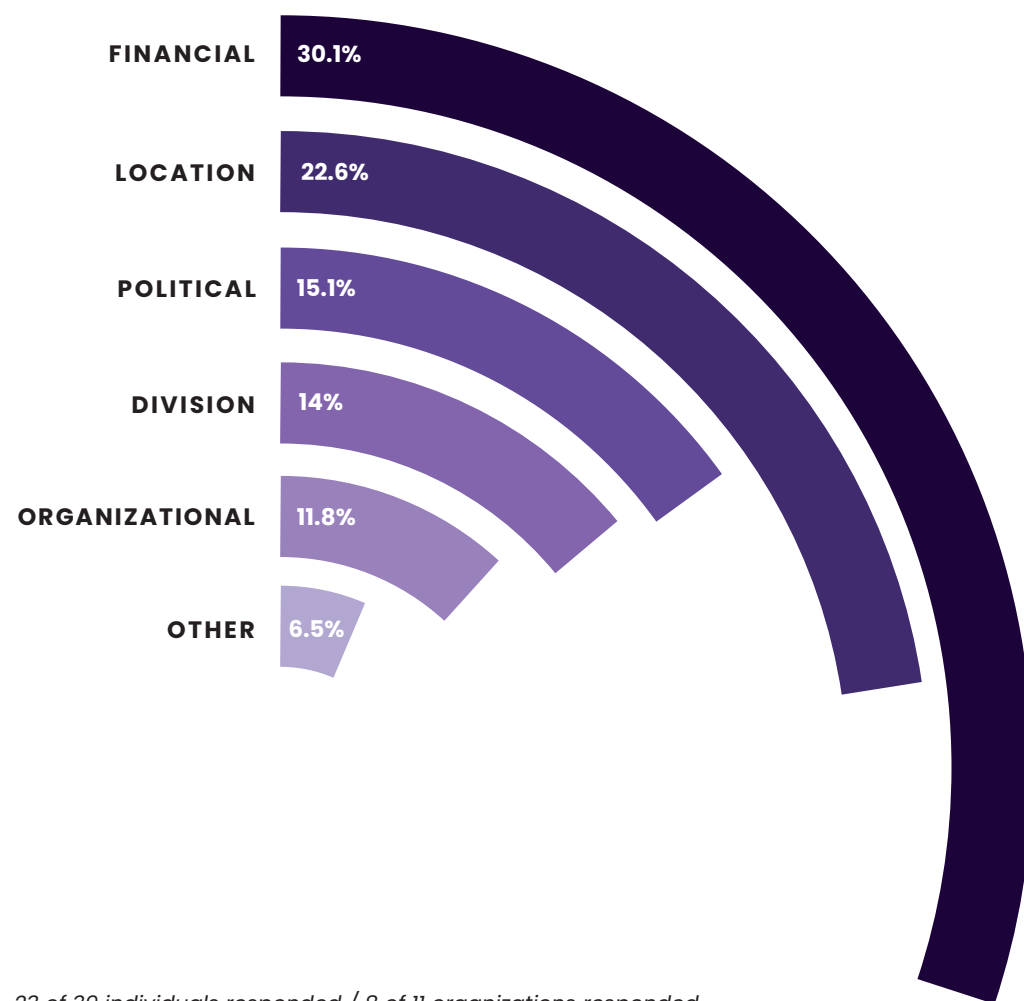
// *Being an artist in an isolated area is easier than in 1986 with the internet, but it is still a challenge with contact, space, shipping costs, small populations and information.* //

– (Survey participant)

There are numerous factors to consider when acquiring or developing a creative space, some are common across communities such as a building's physical location, organizational capacity, financial health, and political influences, while other circumstances are more place-based, for example, geographical isolation and socioeconomic influences which impact on viability.

When asked to identify some of the circumstances that make a creative space in their area difficult to develop and maintain, respondents cited location, financial, organizational, and political and/or division considerations, as well as a few concerns unique to their communities. The survey captured many comments centered around viability, some specifically referenced the "public's undervaluation of arts and culture".

**Figure 10: Circumstances that make a creative space difficult to develop and maintain**



23 of 39 individuals responded / 8 of 11 organizations responded

### COVID-19

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 and its long-lasting effect on the arts, culture, and heritage sector is also one of the top considerations for respondents. This is an emerging trend across Ontario and is particularly urgent for arts and culture facilities forced to remain closed or on very limited hours and usage. Concerns about physical distancing and other health and safety requirements are top of mind as are the effects it has had on revenue, programming, and participation, and its negative impact on the seasonal regional tourist economy.

### FINANCIAL

Funding, access to capital, and operational costs.

### LOCATION

Space factors (the physical building) include: availability of proper space/land; size; permanent options that are accessible and affordable; suitability for artistic needs (creation, performance, exhibition); retail location suitable for locals and tourists.

Place factors (the geographical context) include: remote, rural environment; growth potential within a smaller rural setting due to limited audience; challenge of developing relationships with artists in remote Northwestern Ontario communities.

### POLITICAL

Refers to limited government support, etc. with one respondent identifying "The economy and lack of support from various levels of government".

### DIVISION

Diverse visions of needs to be considered when selecting a viable path forward: community buy-in and/or broader community cooperation, including "Competition with other community interests."

### ORGANIZATIONAL

No existing organization to support development; limited management capacity including concerns about their ability to run creative spaces, whether it be lack of time, knowledge and skill and/or priorities recognizing they are artists first and foremost.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Other category is where topics unique to Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls were cited. They include: seasonal residents and tourism; winter closures; insufficient of parking; living in isolation and/or off the grid; old infrastructure; and various social issues.



*Figure 11: Douglas Family Art Centre, Kenora*

## 2.6 Sustaining Creative Space

This section provides information regarding areas in which the participants from Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls’ are seeking to build capacity through developing skills and accessing resources; the types of current and future partnerships, and the purposes of such.

Key factors impacting the sustainability of creative spaces centre on a range of capacities including creating viable and relevant products, operationalizing creation and production, reaching and expanding intended audiences, and conveying the value of such to others, e.g. leaders, decision-makers, investors and the broader public. Relationships and networks (intersector, intrasector; local, regional) play a significant role providing critical information flows enabling the sector to increase its sustainability and resilience through access to learning opportunities, information, sharing, and leveraging limited resources. Access to capital and reliable and longer term funding opportunities are essential (Ortiz, 2017).



## 2.6.1

### Capacity and Advancement



The arts and culture sector, in general, is continually adapting to the needs of its workers, volunteers, and audiences. Various sector support, service, and discipline-specific organizations offer learning opportunities and training, work on policy and advocacy, and connect the varied members of the sector through communication channels. This work is on-going due to human turn-over, changes in technology, audience trends, and research and development findings.

Respondents in Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls point to several key skills and resources they want to develop and access in order to increase their capacity to be successful artists, leaders, and space owners/operators. Advocacy capability and marketing support top the list for all respondents. Additionally, business acumen and knowledge pertaining to social advancement (accessibility, inclusion, equity) are priorities for individuals, while operational and financial skills are also key for organizations. One organization cited visioning, which is critical to ensuring ongoing accountability in meeting its mandate while responding to changing circumstances such as demographics, economic climate, and more recently COVID-19.

Participant comments regarding these topic include:

### BUSINESS PLANNING

- How to involve community government, lease space, and run a co-operative gallery
- Pivoting: Money needed for pivot to online instruction, equipment and expertise (filming, editing, etc.)
- Expansion: I have lots of ideas and would like to do [teaching online]...to do so requires an outlay of money to hire videographers, knowledge, training, etc.

### MARKETING

- Build a literal map/listing/directory of the arts spaces in Kenora, especially for tourists and seasonal residents.
- Arts entrepreneurs need publicity support, in addition to credit/funding.
- Use Instagram as a place to share and connect with results and the arts.

### ADVOCACY

- I'm just hoping to be part of the conversation about creative spaces in my community. Creative endeavours like mine need support in order to flourish.

**Table 14: Skills and Resources to Increase Capacity and Advancement**

	Individuals	Organizations
Advocacy (ways to validate investment in the arts, increase political understanding of value of investment in the arts, means of justifying existence in terms that would shift decision-makers toward investment and support)	6	3
Business (planning, strategy, HR)	3	1
Financial (how to diversify revenues, regular management)	2	2
Marketing (online presence, etc.)	6	3
Operational (facility management, asset management, maintenance, etc.)	1	2
Social/Cultural (accessibility, inclusion, diversity, equity, etc.)	4	1
Space audit/plan	1	1
Other: visioning	N/A	1

Individuals: 10 of 39 responded / Organizations: 5 of 11 responded

Each chart category is very broad and is intended to provide an overview of the skills and resources participants are seeking. Investigating these areas to determine the specific nature of support best suit them would be very useful. For example, Business (planning, strategy, HR) could include revisioning and branding or employment wage subsidy information. It could also include ways to attain business infrastructure (advertising, registration and payment gateways) that would facilitate teaching workshops and or selling products and services. Marketing online might require photographing products, web design, solving shipping solutions and/or product development to meet a new target, and efficiency in creating and managing content.

The study shows that there is considerable local knowledge in the community that may be drawn upon to support sector development. For example, the Northwest Business Centre (NWBC), located in Kenora, provides the region with small business resources and support services tailored to their individual needs. They have offered the arts sector business development programming and during the virtual forum, reiterated their commitment to responding to identified needs. A number of participants were not aware of these opportunities and intend to raise the awareness with their members.

NWBC is currently promoting the Digital Main Street platform, a free 'how to' guide to help grow businesses. In partnership with NORDIK Institute's Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE) initiative, the NWBC is encouraging the development of social enterprises—businesses with a social, cultural, or environmental concern—which the arts and culture sector falls. In the North, there is increasing awareness of the concept of social enterprises. The federal and provincial governments are providing various investment opportunities for such enterprises and some creative spaces are seeking opportunities under this revenue envelope.

ArtsBuild Ontario was created as an arts service organization for arts and cultural infrastructure out of a specific identified need, and continues to serve the sector as the definition of and the spaces themselves evolve. Please refer to [Appendix I: Resources, page 68](#) for a list of additional organizations dedicated to arts and culture sector capacity and advancement development.

Sustaining creative space or operating a micro creative business is extremely demanding requiring a plethora of skill sets firmly rooted in the business world. Recommendations in section, [3.0: Summary Conclusions and Next Steps, page 53](#) offer pathways for navigating these challenges.

## 2.6.2

### Partnerships and Collaboration

In the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area the study indicated there are currently various working relationships between artists, arts organizations, the non-profit and museum/heritage sectors, school boards, and faith spaces. These partnerships exist to leverage financial resources, space, staffing/volunteers, marketing and audience development, supplies, expertise, and networking opportunities.

Individual respondents envision increased and future partnerships with the municipal, provincial and Indigenous governments, businesses, and the non-profit and museum/heritage sectors. These would be for increased financial, space, expertise, marketing, and supplies.

Organizational respondents want to put their efforts into increased and future partnerships with the museum/heritage sector, service clubs, as well as Black/Indigenous/People of Colour (BIPOC), Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Trans/Queer/2 Spirit/+ (LGBTQ2S+), and immigrant communities. These would be for increased programming, audience development and marketing, expertise, and staffing/volunteer support.

Participants in the community forum noted some specific examples of partnerships in action in Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls.

- Churches – a theatre company and others use it for performance
- School auditoriums used for performances
- Unique Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls event was held in the provincial park in summer 2020

The Sustaining Creative Space section reveals that there are a number of key areas where respondents would like assistance to strengthen their individual and organizational operations. Areas include business, equity and inclusion and garnering more sector support and/or investment. There are a number of knowledgeable local people who could assist with capacity building, as well as the Northwest Business Centre. Participants have identified a number of existing partnerships, relationships and networks that enable sharing information and lining to consumers. Networks with the business sector could play a significant role in accessing expertise, key resources and training to further sustain the sector, (e.g. linking business-minded entrepreneurs artists could lead to new hybrid models of operating micro businesses, allowing them time to focus on their core capacities).



**Table 15: Types of Partnerships**

	Individuals		Organizations	
	Current	Future	Current	Future
BIPOC communities	1	1	1	4
Businesses	1	3	2	1
Faith-based organizations	0	0	0	0
Federal government	0	1	1	1
Immigrant communities	1	0	0	3
Indigenous government	0	2	1	1
Legions or service clubs	1	1	0	2
LGBTQ2S+ communities	1	1	1	3
Municipal government	1	3	2	1
Museums or heritage organizations	3	4	3	3
Non-profit organizations	3	4	3	2
Provincial government	0	3	2	1
Sports/Recreation clubs or facilities	1	1	2	2
Other – Lake of the Woods Art Community, professional artists, universities, colleges, high schools	2	1	2	N/A

Current: 5 of 39 individuals responded / Future: 13 of 39 individuals responded


Current: 3 of 11 organizations responded / Future: 4 of 11 organizations responded

**Table 16: Purpose of Partnerships**

	Individuals		Organizations	
	Current	Future	Current	Future
Audience Development	3	3	2	4
Expertise	3	5	1	3
Financial	3	5	3	1
Marketing	3	7	2	2
Operations	0	0	1	0
Physical Building/Space	2	4	2	0
Programming	1	2	2	4
Staffing/Volunteers	2	0	2	2
Supplies	1	3	0	0
Not Applicable	5	6	0	1
Other - working with other artists, supplying product;-research, kindred interests for personal development, design/build	3	N/A	1	N/A

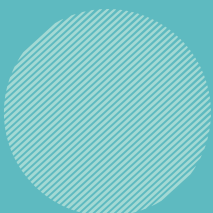
Current: 11 of 39 individuals responded / Future: 16 of 39 individuals responded

Current: 3 of 11 organizations responded / Future: 5 of 11 organizations responded



# 3.0

## Summary Conclusions and Next Steps



Community culture — values and norms — underpin sustainability and resilience. Places that engage diverse communities and develop meaningful connections in the inclusionary and respectful utilization of resources, foster the capacity to innovate, adapt and transition through rapidly changing contexts. The arts and/or other opportunities for civic engagement create networks of dense, diverse relationships that build new knowledge and synergy informing and engendering perseverance to tackle complex personal, community and/or regional issues (Wheatley and Frieze, 2006).

There is considerable evidence of the numerous ways engagement in the arts creates social capital and cohesion, impacting on perceptions and behaviours. Many understand the primary objective of the sector is to give meaning to life and create ways of living together (Gielen, Elkhuisen, van den Hoogen, Lijster, and Otte, 2014, p. 22). Contextualizing the arts within typical economic frameworks, those that focus on the economic return of the product and job creation, exclude the significant benefit accrued through the production and exchange of goods and services (i.e. active engagement in the arts). It generates continuous community renewal through the creation of unique products and services, enhances life through learning and sharing, and fosters localized creative economies that link regionally and connect globally.

Research conducted in Northern Ontario's arts sector indicates that artists and arts organizations understand their contribution to resilience, are vibrant with potential, but feel they are largely under-resourced, undervalued, underdeveloped and underutilized; isolated as though they are a separate community within the broader whole. Limited cultural infrastructure spanning the continuum of creation, production, marketing, consumption and financing

are cited as deficits that hinder sector visibility, vitality, and viability. Communities vary in their commitment and investment in the sector for many reasons. There is, however, a wealth of untapped potential in the region that could be developed and leveraged to create healthy resilient people and places (Ortiz, 2017).

A foundational component of cultural infrastructure is creative space. It is an enabler, facilitating engagement in the production and consumption of cultural goods. It plays an integral role in the sector's flow in two foundational streams:

- i) the continuum of creative processes and products to the circulation of goods (e.g. for personal use, gifts to others, or for selling in the marketplace); and,
- ii) connectivity: the formation of networks and relationships that build capacity; and linkages between producers, consumers, the general public, and policy and decision-makers, which impact a sense of community, influence local policy and planning, and foster local creative economies.

When assessing creative space needs, it is important to recognize the two intertwined threads of investigation: the space itself, its existence and suitability; and, the operationalizing of it (i.e. activities that occur within the space).



The study served to provide the communities with a snapshot of creative spaces: what exists; where there are gaps and needs; the concerns, ideas, hopes for the future; and suggestions regarding ways to move forward. Surveys found creative space in Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls and its animation is contributing to local identity and belonging, and the development of innovative, unique products and services that are recognized beyond its borders. It is engaging people that range in age from 16 to over 70, illustrating the importance of art in one's life over time. Current activities are attracting local and seasonal residents as well as tourists. At least five organizations have operated for more than 20 years, including one for more than 50 years. They have a variety of management structures, drawing on paid employment, volunteer labour, and combinations thereof. Individual respondents indicated their practice disciplines are diverse with a very strong emphasis on visual arts, followed by a particular focus on community arts, music, theatre and performance. When compared to what programming is currently offered, there appear to be underutilized capacities (i.e. music, theatre, film, performance, heritage, mixed-media, multi-disciplinary) and a desire to increase engagement in these areas as well as other disciplines. Individual respondents indicated their practice disciplines are diverse with a very strong emphasis on visual arts, followed by a particular focus on community arts, music, theatre and performance. When compared to what programming is currently offered, there appear to be underutilized capacities (i.e. music, theatre, film, performance, heritage, mixed-media, multi-disciplinary) and a desire to increase engagement in these areas as well as other disciplines.

Participants, specifically 56% of the total respondents (28 of 50), identified a need for more creative space and provided direction regarding operational structures, type/purpose of space, programming they wish to deliver and audiences they wish to reach. Thirty have creative space; 13 do not have space; and, three individuals want the space for their private needs, while the rest would like the space open to the public. The majority of individuals have no preference between leased or owned space; however, organizations prefer to lease. All respondents preferred a city/town location to a rural site. **The primary type of space individual participants are seeking is retail and discipline-specific studio space, followed by exhibition, performance and multi-disciplinary hubs. Organizations' indicated performance, followed by discipline-specific studio space, rehearsal and performance space.** In terms of acquiring creative space, **13 respondents are willing or interested in partnering with others to purchase, rent and/or build a creative space.** Respondents also noted challenges and considerations around acquiring and developing space, and the skills and resources to assist with achieving their goals and sustaining their operations.

The study indicates Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls has a solid base upon which to further develop a vibrant arts, culture and heritage sector that would reap broader community benefits. Many of the key pieces to build capacity and advance the sector currently exist; however, the missing 'dots' that would greatly increase the sector's sustainability and expedite growth largely revolve around human resources and a coordinated plan to that would:

- i) Link Artists and Organizations to Existing Resources;
- ii) Leverage Capacity; and,
- iii) Lead by Developing Models of Sustainability.

A number of areas where the sector is seeking resources are identified in Kenora's 2011 [Municipal Cultural Plan](#) (MCP), specifically:

- Strategy #1: Raising the Profile of Culture
- Strategy #3: Improving Communication and Promotion
- Strategy #4: Increasing Coordination, Support and Partnerships with Community Organizations
- Strategy #5: Addressing Cultural Facility and Gathering Space Needs
- Strategy #7: Expanding Lifelong Learning and Professional Development Opportunities
- Strategy #8: Fostering and Attracting Cultural Industries
- Strategy #9: Building Cultural and Environmental Tourism
- Strategy #10: Investing in Cultural Development

The Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls Community Improvement Plan (2012) and the Strategic Plan 2019–2023 indicates a continued commitment to arts, culture and heritage, with three key foci:

- (i) Moose n' Fiddle Music Festival at Caliper Lake Provincial Park;
- (ii) Artist in Residence program at Tiny Studios; and
- (iii) the Bridge and Falls Visitors Guide (p. 6).

Identifying where arts, culture and heritage sector development gaps link to community planning documents is not intended to imply the municipalities are solely responsible for its development, but rather to illustrate the identified areas and advocate for sufficient resources to enable the sector to meet their stated objectives. In Kenora's MCP culture is seen as: (i) a driver for community reinvention and economic development; (ii) a community unifier and source of personal enrichment; (iii) a world-class four-season destination; (iv) a place that has spaces to gather, network, and partner and are welcoming to youth (p.15–16). Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls Strategic Plan 2019–2023's vision continues to value cultural events and the arts and will support community involvement and community pride; will reflect a positive attitude and take a proactive role in community development; and, will practice sustainable economic development and balance business opportunities with the environmental health of the community (p. 4).

## 3.1 Recommendations

### 3.1.1

#### Moving Forward

Hire a dedicated, full-time limited term position to create a development plan to address the creative space needs identified in this study. The person would work in collaboration with the project partners and others dedicated to advancing arts and culture in the area, for example, Kenora's Community Service Department personnel, and an identified personnel of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls. The person would:

1. Ensure diverse voices, particularly youth and Indigenous residents, are consulted regarding creative space needs;
2. Create a development plan based on the study and additional consultations;
3. Liaise with the local project partners in prioritizing action items, funding sources and implementation of the plan;
4. Connect with ArtsBuild Ontario as a key player.

### 3.1.2

#### Link Sector to Resources

Networks of relationships are critical to utilizing local resources and creating resilient communities. Every locale has people with knowledge and skills that could support development. Key is creating the critical connections to facilitate that development. The sector is composed of individuals and organizations (i.e., micro businesses with limited resources) that may not be aware of, or have the time or resources to individually source or gain the necessary tools to sustain or advance certain operations.

This area outlines areas in need of capacity building for advancement that can be met through connecting the sector individually or collectively to existing local, nearby and/or provincial resources.

The majority of the recommendations should be moved forward by the proposed staff person in Section 3.1.1. If the position is not filled, arts organizations and the municipality are encouraged to work together to identify ways to implement the recommendations.

## **I. FACILITY MANAGEMENT**

This category includes facility management, asset management, maintenance and space audits.

- Connect local artists and arts organizations to local or provincial sector expertise (e.g. ArtsBuild Ontario)

## **II. BUSINESS TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Business literacy, plan development, human resource management and potentially business infrastructure (advertising, registration and payment gateways) that would facilitate teaching workshops, selling products and services and/or ticketed events to increase revenue streams.

- Connect with Northwest Business Centre, local expertise and/or development organizations, or provincial organizations with a mandate for arts sector education and training to identify sector needs and more individualized business development support. (Kenora MCP: 8.4; SN-NF Strategic Plan: i; ii; iii)

Strategic Planning (e.g., visioning, increasing social and cultural accessibility, inclusion, diversity, equity). Although each plan is unique the process for developing a plan is similar, thus, a number of organizations could undertake it simultaneously, tailoring their plans by identifying individual pathways forwards and strategic priorities.

- Link to Northwest Business Centre, local and northeastern Ontario area sector (artists, arts administrators), and those organizations currently working within an equity framework (regionally: NORDIK Institute; Provincially: ArtsBuild Ontario for creative spaces specifically).
- The arts sector may have pre-existing relationships with organizations in Manitoba that could support strategic planning as well.

## **III. COACHING, MENTORING AND/OR TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN**

- Identify local or regional resource people from various sectors who could provide direction. (Kenora MCP: 4.3; 7.3; SN-NF Strategic Plan: i; ii; iii)

## **IV. ACCESS TO CAPITAL**

IV.a Grant writing: to increase skills and/or access people with that capacity.

- Training workshops could be delivered through business support organizations.
- Business development organizations could be approached individually or collectively to guide people through their program applications.
- Granting agencies may offer webinars to support the development of particular applications.
- The municipalities could include those with grant writing skills in their asset mapping database, identifying if they are available for hire, or paid or volunteer mentorship/coaching. (MCP: 7.3; 8.4)



IV.b Fundraising and investment readiness:  
to increase applicant success

- Training workshops and coaching to prepare investment pitches
- Connect with Northwest Business Centre and/or investors to facilitate workshops or provide coaching (MCP: 8.4; 10.1)

### 3.1.3

## Leverage Sector Capacity

This section identifies areas of existing artistic and space capacity that are underutilized and/or in need of improvement, where further inquiry is needed to determine goals, and resources that could be leveraged to assist in developing strategic pathways and timelines to achieve aspirations and maximize operations.

### I. IMPROVE FUNCTIONALITY OF EXISTING PHYSICAL SPACE

- Determine specific space needs (i.e., what can be carried out in existing space; space needs renovation; new space needed). Determine if additional educational, business management tools (e.g. registration, payment gateways) or marketing capacity is needed. Assess the feasibility of such and develop pathways to meet goals. (MCP: 5.4; 8.4)

### II. INCREASE FUTURE ACTIVITIES TO FILL CREATIVE SPACE NEEDS

- Determine specific space needs (i.e., what can be carried out in existing space; space needs renovation; new space needed). Determine if additional educational, business management tools (e.g. registration, payment gateways) or marketing capacity is needed. Assess the feasibility of such and develop pathways to meet goals. (MCP: 5.4; 8.4; 9.2)

Resources for addressing built space needs:

- **Skilled Trades:** Investigate employment skills programs focusing on construction, or other education related training programs that could provide trades people to advise, assist and/or execute the work.
- **In-kind Investment:** Bartering opportunities may attract skilled local people and/or seasonal residents interested in keeping active, increasing social networks and/or ways to contribute to the community.
- **Capital Projects/Plan implementation:** Secure a project manager to determine needs and bundle physical space requests into a larger project to create occasions for cooperation and mutual support, reduce operators' workload and cost effectiveness. The project undertakings could be framed as a campaign for sector investment. (Kenora MCP: Strategy #5; 10.1; 10.3; 10.4; SN-NF Strategic Plan: i; ii)

### III. INCREASE OPERATING HOURS

- Determine if the goal to extend hours of operation is seasonal or year-round, and feasibility and/or support necessary to achieve goals. (MCP: 9.2; 8.4)

### IV. INCREASE DEMOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT

- Determine desired audience; assess feasibility; develop business and marketing plans to attract more local and seasonal residents, as well as tourists. (Kenora MCP: Strategy #3; 4.5; 7.3; 8.1; 9.2; 9.5; SN-NF Strategic Plan: i; ii)

## **V. INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO CREATIVE SPACE**

Obstacles to accessibility include geographical distance to spaces; limited transit options; and older infrastructure without accessible features such as ramps, automatic doors, and elevators.

- Determine barriers to specific spaces and chart a pathway to meeting Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements.

## **VI. INCREASE RECURRING ENGAGEMENT**

- Determine programming interest for recurring engagement; determine if space needs renovating; assess feasibility and identify ways to support transitioning to recurring engagement. (MCP: 4.5; 8.4; 9.2)

## **VII. INCREASE BUILDING UTILIZATION**

- Determine programming interest for recurring engagement; determine if space needs renovating; assess feasibility and identify ways to support transitioning to recurring engagement.

## **VIII. INCREASE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS**

- Determine where there are shared visions and goals, programming and space needs between and among artists and organizations. This will enable these parties to identify efficiencies of expertise and scale whether they are co-located or operating separately. (MCP: 4.1; 4.2)

## **IX. INCREASE MICRO-BUSINESSES**

One of the greatest challenges of operating a microbusiness or a smaller organization is ensuring there is sufficient time to dedicate to its core purpose, in addition to its operational side.

Regional research indicates there are three categories of artists: i) those genuinely interested in operating a business; ii) those reluctantly learning the business of art but would prefer others handle it; and iii) those not interested in business because their products are gifted to others. The largest category is artists reluctantly participating in business activities out of default. Many cite the need to generate revenue to continue producing but consider time spent on business activities not the best use of their limited resources, preferring business professionals to handle it. A number of artists whose goods are intended for gifting suggest they would be interested in selling their work if others would do it for them (Ortiz, 2017, p. 236).

- Connect business-savvy people, who have an interest in the arts, with operators to develop the business side or provide services that would enable artists to focus on their core competencies, and thus, significantly contribute to the creative sector's sustainability. Explore leveraging existing entrepreneurs with business skills into hybrid models to increase the economic potential of both. (Kenora MCP: 8.4)

It is also relevant to Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls' Strategic Plan for arts and culture development.

### 3.1.4

## Lead With Sustainable Models

Rapidly changing contexts, from the impacts of globalization, technological advancement and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitates revisiting models of sustainability. Attempts to document the sector within traditional economic frameworks exclude a vast amount of transactions—economic, cultural and social—that occur outside of traditional working hours and primary occupations (i.e. the sector is largely unmeasurable).

One significant challenge facing the perception of the sector is the scale of operations. The region remains dominated by mills and mines that privilege large scale operations, from employment incentives, to funding, to models of prosperity. In contrast, the arts is composed of micro operations, individuals or organizations, many with few paid employees, but that provide critical secondary and/or supplemental income, assist in maintaining health and wellbeing and cultural continuance. Surviving the boom-bust cycle of extractive industries and the seasonal nature of farming, logging, hunting, fishing and tourism frequently depends upon finding ways to bridge the financial gap between jobs, particularly at this juncture in time. Notably, as the economy fractures, more people are turning to the arts and culture sector as a means of survival (Ortiz, 2017).

#### **I. RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE SECTOR**

While there has been considerable progress in integrating the sector's development into the City of Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls' plans, the study suggests it remains undervalued and underdeveloped. There is notable need to increase understanding of the sector's importance to individual and collective health, wellbeing, and prosperity.

- Increase the visibility of the arts, culture and heritage sector. This can be achieved through a number of avenues including promotional tools such as advocacy, technology that markets opportunities and facilities engagement, increasing creative space, and developing sustainable funding models.

#### **II. MARKETING AND ONLINE PRESENCE**

Individual and organizational online presence requires a continuum of preparedness in numerous areas including product/service development, pricing, photography, affordable and reliable broadband internet, the capacity to manage the technology, and a marketing strategy.

- Connect with the Northwest Business Centre to develop business plans. The digital Main Street online store platform may suit individual operators. Northwest Business Centre and arts organizations such as Lake of the Woods Arts Community (LOWAC) may also provide links to other dedicated service providers. (Kenora MCP: 8.4; 9.1)
- Sector-wide marketing strategy including a map or database of art spaces and activities for seasonal residents and tourists. Local municipalities could play a lead role in developing this strategy (particularly as it connects to the Kenora MCP: 1.7 and Strategy #3; and the Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls Strategic Plan regarding marketing and publication of the Bridge and Falls Summer Visitors Guide).

### III. ADVOCACY

With the rapidly changing contexts, centering the sector as a necessity of local resilience and sustainability is a strategic way to communicate the sector's value. It conveys the sector's contributions to health and wellbeing, a culture of creativity and innovation as well as its spillover effects.

- Seek jurisdictions with similar issues; identify the message; tailor it to the target audience; and convey the impact in language familiar and meaningful to the reader. The latter category is where the arts sector faces the most challenge and where working across sectors to translate areas of added value to the broader community would be beneficial.
- Create an awareness campaign to document and share the importance of culture on a personal level to individuals in the community, on an economic level, environmental, and social level. (Kenora MCP: 1.3; 1.4; 1.8; 2.1; 2.5; 4.3; SN–NF Strategic Plan, Vision)

### IV. INVESTMENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS

- Develop a locally viable sustainable funding model incorporating both public and private support to further develop creative spaces. Investigate reallocating existing development resources to the arts sector; resource sharing across sectors; and investment incentives for private and/or public/private partnerships. (MCP: 2.4)

The majority of barriers to investment are seen as outcomes of cultural values reflected in government policy and community development priorities that frame the arts primarily as an economic product, rather than an integral part of life, of which one part is the economic sphere. Investors favour larger scale operations and formalized business plans. Micro arts businesses are predominated by creative people whose core capacity is producing products and services. Some have business management experience, and the larger operations typically employ professional arts administrators. Individuals may not have business plans, and some disciplines are heavily subscribed by women (Ortiz, 2017). Studies on the impact of the gender gap indicate that women face disparities in access to education, health care, finances and technology, and often predominate in undervalued economic sectors (Kochhar, Jain–Chandra and Newiak, 2017).

Municipal and Indigenous government investment and incentives are seen as leaders for orchestrating longer-term funding models. Strategies include: resource sharing across sectors; reallocating existing development resources to the arts sector; business investment and partnerships through multi-year sponsorships; in-kind support: public and/or private investment in affordable built infrastructure, e.g. space (operating, studio and storage, live/work) housing, cafés and venues that link producers to each other, to the public and to the marketplace (Ortiz, 2017, p. 231).



## **V. ACQUIRING OR DEVELOPING CREATIVE SPACE**

Although the study indicated a need for more creative space, further investigation is needed to determine which individuals and organizations are interested in proceeding (timelines, business-readiness, etc.) and pathways forward. A number of respondents are open to exploring collective management structure options which could include cooperatives and creative hubs or co-location. Models for acquiring and managing creative spaces including accessing idle space need to be determined. Hybrids of municipal-arts sector partnerships or other such collaborations providing capital, organizational and operational leadership, would create mentorships and training opportunities in facility management, and potentially enable the building to become independent over time. (Kenora MCP: Strategy #5; #10)

## **VI. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS**

While not a legal business structure, the social enterprise model – those with a mandate to address a social, cultural or environmental concern – is gaining traction, resulting in government investment under a variety of envelopes. Explore these funding options.

## **VII. PEER LENDING CIRCLES**

For smaller investments peer lending circles are becoming increasingly popular as alternatives to traditional sources. They build financial literacy while creating strong professional networks and support systems amongst participants.

### 3.1.5

## Summary

The results of this project provide Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls, NORDIK, and ArtsBuild Ontario with key information about the local arts, culture, and heritage sector, individual and organizational value and impact, and the important role creative spaces play in the community's quality of life. Respondents participated to provide information, learn from each other, and find active solutions. These statistics, trends, and identified needs can serve as a guide for local resource development and expansion, as well as rallying points for community vision and action. They also show where ArtsBuild Ontario and other regional, provincial or national organizations may offer meaningful learning resources and may be strategic future partners.

In sum, the Kenora and Sioux Narrows–Nestor Falls area has considerable assets upon which to further enliven and strengthen the arts and culture sector. Municipal government has invested in cultural infrastructure in both locales in the past. Those engaged in the arts demonstrate expertise, commitment and perseverance; however, further sector investment (financial, in-kind support, leadership) would advance community health and wellbeing and foster the necessary skills for ongoing innovation and renewal in response to the dynamic knowledge economy.

In closing, it is important to note that although this study's focus is the arts and culture sector (specifically creative space needs and gaps), many of the building and operational concerns raised by survey participants are not exclusive to the arts and culture sector. Non-profit organizations and those operating micro businesses face similar challenges and would benefit from the support, connectivity and further research noted in this section.

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# Appendix I: Resources

## **AKIN**

Sourcing and Setting Up Studio Space & Understanding Commercial Leases guide: The Akin team of practicing artists and arts educators has collaborated on this document in the interest of sharing some of their learnings over the past twelve years on how to source, secure and set up art studios and creative spaces in Toronto. These insights could help artists to pursue setting up studios themselves, or with others, but much of this information can apply more generally to anyone entering into a commercial lease.

## **ARTSBUILD ONTARIO**

ArtsBuild Ontario is a non profit arts service organization dedicated to realizing long-term solutions for building, managing, and financing the sustainable arts facilities needed in Ontario communities. ABO provides people with training, [tools](#), and [resources](#) that support the development and management of creative spaces. ABO has an extensive online collection of [webinars](#), [case studies](#), reports, and [toolkits](#) that are available for people to learn from and utilize.

## **ARTSCAPEDIY**

Artscape's knowledge sharing website for information and inspiration to support creative placemaking in your community. Includes [case studies](#), [tools](#) and [resources](#), including downloadable templates and examples, films, guides and articles designed to help people through the often complex and risky business of developing sustainable, affordable space for culture and creativity.

## **CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS**

*(grants organized into six different programs; includes project, operating, and digital)*  
The Canada Council for the Arts is Canada's public arts funder, with a mandate to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts.

### **CONSEIL DE ARTS DE HEARST**

Conseil de arts de Hearst, a francophone cultural space model with a gallery and rental opportunities for other community organizations, arts sector and otherwise.

### **DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Federal department with many grant programs, the [Canada Cultural Spaces Fund](#) is specific to arts and culture infrastructure and is open for applications year-round.

- *Valerie Hopper* - [valerie.hopper@canada.ca](mailto:valerie.hopper@canada.ca)
- *Laura Montgomery* - [laura.montgomery@canada.ca](mailto:laura.montgomery@canada.ca)

### **DISTILLERY DISTRICT**

Distillery District is Toronto's pedestrian-only arts and entertainment destination housing many workshops and shopping opportunities.

### **E-LEARNING FROM WORKINCULTURE**

E-Learning from WorkinCulture - courses on project management, financial management, partnership and collaboration.

### **ENABLING ACCESSIBILITY FUND (EAF)**

Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) - provides funding for projects that make Canadian communities and workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities. EAF aims to create more opportunities for persons with disabilities to take part in community activities, programs and services, or to access employment.

### **FEDNOR**

The Government of Canada's economic development organization for Northern Ontario. Through its programs and services, and through its financial support of projects that lead to job creation and economic growth, FedNor works with businesses and community partners to build a stronger Northern Ontario.

- [COVID-19 Regional Relief and Recovery Fund \(RRRF\)](#) - to help vulnerable businesses and eligible not-for-profit organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Regional Economic Growth through Innovation \(REGI\)](#) - supporting the growth of Canadian businesses, their expansion into new markets and their adoption of new technologies and processes.
- [Northern Ontario Development Program \(NODP\)](#) - supporting communities' efforts to plan and mobilize their resources, enhance business growth, and exploit new opportunities for economic development and diversification.
- [Community Futures Program \(CFP\)](#) - encouraging the growth of small and medium-sized businesses via a network of 24 Community Futures Development Corporations spread out across the region.
- [Economic Development Initiative \(EDI\)](#) - enhancing the economic viability of the region's Francophone communities through support for innovation, economic diversification and business growth initiatives.

## **NORDIK INSTITUTE**

NORDIK (Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge) Institute is an innovative community-based research hub that has evolved from the Community, Economic, and Social Development (CESD) program and research at Algoma University. It is committed to the practice of holistic community development and has established strong links with other research institutes, universities, and colleges. It works closely with its community partners and provides mentorship to new researchers and community development practitioners. Its areas of experience include arts, culture, heritage sector; tourism; the social economy and social enterprises; and community justice.

Research in the culture sector includes: [Culture, Creativity and the Arts: Achieving Community Resilience and Sustainability through the Arts in Sault Ste. Marie](#) (2007); [Breathing Northwinds](#) (2011); [Growing Ontario's Crafts North](#) (2012); [Sustaining Northern Arts Organizations through Peer Mentoring Networks](#) (2013); [Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit](#) (2018); and [Culture, Creativity and the Arts: Building Northern Ontario's Resilience](#) (2017).

For those reading a print version of this report, the previously mentioned research is available at [www.nordikinstitute.com](http://www.nordikinstitute.com)

## **NORTHWEST BUSINESS CENTRE**

Resources for small business in the Kenora/Rainy River District; they offer free and confidential, one-on-one business support through personal consultation, guidance, resource and delivery referrals.

## **NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND (NOHFC)**

- The [Community Enhancement Program](#) will facilitate upgrades and repairs to vital community assets, such as recreational facilities, community centres and broadband infrastructure that contribute to improved quality of life and support strategic economic development initiatives.
- The [Cultural Supports Program](#) will promote and showcase Northern Ontario's culture, geography, and talent through the production of films and television series and by supporting events, such as conferences and festivals that elevate the profile of communities.
- The [People and Talent Program](#) will attract, develop, and retain a strong northern workforce by supporting a broader range of internships and apprenticeships and providing more opportunities for Indigenous people to gain job experience.

## **ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL**

*(offers project grants and operating grants)*

OAC is an agency that operates at arm's length from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. The OAC's grants and services to professional, Ontario-based artists and arts organizations support arts education, Indigenous arts, community arts, crafts, dance, Francophone arts, literature, media arts, multidisciplinary arts, music, theatre, touring, and visual arts. Additional COVID recovery funding for individual artists will be announced in Spring 2021.

### **ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION**

*(offers program/project grants, capital grants, and funding for youth initiatives)*

The mission of the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is to build healthy and vibrant communities throughout Ontario by investing in community-based initiatives and strengthening the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. Additional COVID recovery funding for operations and capital projects are now available through the Community Building Fund.

### **PARO CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE**

*(business support start up, growth and networks)*

A not-for-profit social enterprise that collaborates to empower women, strengthen small business, and promote community economic development across Ontario. Services include business counselling and support, peer mentoring circles. PARO's three pillars: growing women's companies, accessing new growth opportunities, and expanding access to export markets.

### **SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SEE)**

Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE), an initiative of [NORDIK Institute](#), seeks to address Northern Ontario's social and economic challenges by encouraging a movement of social enterprise and entrepreneurship that stresses community resilience, innovation, support and mobilization. The website hosts a number of bilingual business development resources, including a peer mentoring toolkit, and examples of social enterprises in the region.

