

BRUCE COUNTY

Cultural Action Plan

Community Update 2024



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Introduction

CULTURE plays a vital role in shaping people’s lives, enriching communities, and bolstering the economy. It creates opportunities for shared experiences, enhances quality of life, promotes a sense of vitality, and encourages job creation and innovation across a range of economic sectors.

In 2021, Bruce County developed its first Cultural Action Plan (CAP). This plan outlined a comprehensive set of strategic directions and actions to support the growth and development of the arts and culture sector. Since the adoption of the CAP, Bruce County has implemented several of the recommendations and has continued to collaborate with municipalities and cultural organizations to strengthen the cultural landscape in Bruce County. This document provides an overview of the Cultural Action Plan and reflects the County’s commitment to fostering a vibrant cultural community.

The Cultural Action Plan includes two distinct areas of focus:

- 1. Arts and Culture
- 2. Heritage

Arts and Culture refers to creative expression, including visual arts, music, theatre, dance, and literature. These are guided primarily by local policy, community interests, and the evolving tastes and needs of society. Arts and culture are dynamic and contribute to our community’s identity, vitality, and well-being.

Heritage relates to the preservation and protection of historical, cultural, and natural resources that hold significance for a community or region. It includes buildings, landscapes, traditions, artifacts, and practices passed down from previous generations. Heritage is typically regulated through provincial legislation and managed through local policy.

The full [Bruce County Cultural Action Plan: Technical Final Report](http://www.brucecounty.on.ca/culture) is available at www.brucecounty.on.ca/culture. It provides the legislative context, economic and demographic profile, as well as the methodology used to complete the project.



Cultural Roundtable

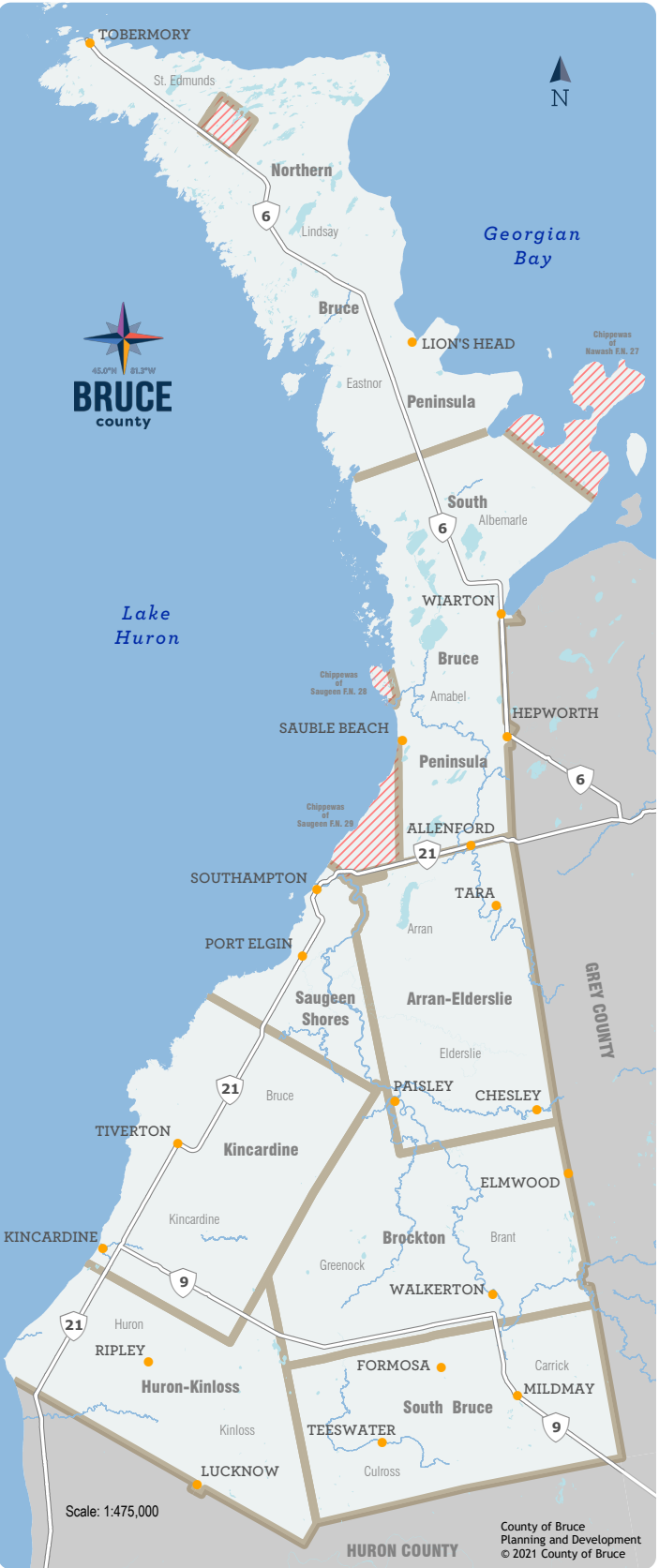
The Cultural Roundtable grew out of the Advisory Committee that was instrumental in developing the CAP. It is the forum used to engage with Bruce County’s Cultural Action Plan. Members include Bruce County staff, representatives from each municipality, and representatives from cultural organizations and groups across Bruce County. This includes leaders, creatives, makers, and artisans from the arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

The Cultural Roundtable meets twice each year to coordinate cultural planning, improve cultural communication, and provide input into how Bruce County can support building cultural capacity.

New members are welcome! If your organization is passionate about supporting and promoting local culture, the Cultural Roundtable is for you.

To join, or for more information on the Cultural Roundtable or Cultural Action Plan:

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Cultural Resource Framework

Cultural assets fuel the creativity and energy that make each community vibrant and play a key role in shaping the County’s distinctive and diverse identity. Cultural assets include a diverse array of places, events, institutions, knowledge and traditions. They can include creative cultural industries, cultural facilities, natural and cultural heritage features, festivals, events, and community cultural organizations.

Cultural assets are identified and classified using a Cultural Resource Framework (CRF) to help define the character and scope of assets in each community.



Cultural planning aims to foster cultural sustainability. It seeks to enhance vibrant cultural life, support creative industries, celebrate heritage, and ensure equitable access to cultural opportunities. By identifying, organizing, and supporting cultural assets - such as arts, heritage, and festivals - we can strengthen community, drive economic development, and create a welcoming place for everyone.

Cultural sustainability is represented in the diagram below and involves the intersection of cultural, economic, and environmental health and diversity.

Four Pillars of Cultural Sustainability





Strategic Areas

Bruce County’s Cultural Action Plan focusses on five strategic areas:

1. Build Cultural Capacities

The CAP is dedicated to strengthening cultural capacity throughout Bruce County by facilitating connections, sharing resources and identifying opportunities for the growth and development of cultural activities.

2. Develop and Maintain Cultural Assets

Our cultural sights, sounds, and stories are key to making Bruce County a vibrant place to live, vacation, and visit. We want everyone to have the opportunity to experience Bruce County’s heritage, culture, and artistic expressions.

3. Improve Cultural Communication

We value our individual cultural assets, talents, and expertise, and can further strengthen them through coordinated communication and other collaborative efforts.

4. Implement Coordinated Cultural Planning

The CAP aims to promote cultural events and programs while fostering collaboration among cultural stakeholders.

5. Foster Engagement with Indigenous Communities

In July 2024, Bruce County Council demonstrated their commitment to reconciliation by endorsing the Saugeen Anishnaabek Reconciliation Pathway and Action Plan, and the Indigenous Reconciliation Framework. Moving forward, this strategic area will be guided by these plans, and County staff will respectfully seek input on cultural planning initiatives through these frameworks.

Bruce County Cultural Perspective

The Bruce County Cultural Perspective is a shared perspective applied to cultural planning decisions that:

- Recognizes, incorporates, celebrates, and preserves Bruce County’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, adapting when necessary, and respecting the significant role and continued presence of Indigenous peoples;
- Appreciates the relationships between nature and culture, landscape and community, place-making and embeddedness (the relationship between activities and the environment);
- Celebrates and reinforces the resilience and adaptation of diverse communities, past and present, including local legacy and emerging organizations and volunteers; and
- Strives to balance innovation and growth with the inspiration derived from the County’s rich natural and cultural heritage, recognizing that the sustainability of Bruce County’s creative economy depends on both.

Planning decisions are integral to ensuring the sustainability and success of our heritage, culture, and artistic expressions.



Continued Change

Culture Surveys

Bruce County completed State of Culture Surveys in 2020 and 2024 to determine how people engage with culture in Bruce County. The surveys help identify successes, opportunities, and trends in heritage, culture, and arts sectors.

2020 and 2024 are markedly different years. In 2020, the Cultural Action Plan was undertaken amidst Covid restrictions while in 2024, cultural activities have largely returned to their pre-Covid formats.

Based on feedback we received, some of the actions identified in 2020 were refined to better align with the current landscape. Additionally, we have acknowledged where other County initiatives have addressed goals from 2020 and adjusted or removed the identified actions accordingly.

Approach

As Bruce County grows, diversifies, and changes, so does the cultural landscape. The Cultural Action Plan, which began in 2021, was designed with a clear vision and set of goals to guide the development of cultural priorities through 2026. Given the dynamic nature of cultural trends and community needs, the CAP must remain flexible and responsive to adapt to emerging trends and priorities.

Next Steps

As we enter the midpoint of the CAP lifecycle, it is important to assess progress and refine the plan. We will continue to collaborate with cultural stakeholders to review, adjust, and implement objectives that reflect the intent of the CAP while recognizing new opportunities to support the growth and development of Bruce County’s cultural sector.

Restaurants, community centres, hiking trails, library branches, and museums are the most frequently visited cultural locations.

The biggest barrier to engaging with culture was identified as a lack of awareness.



Refined Strategic Directions and Actions

			Not Started	In Progress	Complete
1.	Build Cultural Capacities				
1.1	Formalize County-level cultural administrative, technical, and coordination resources				
1.1.1		Designate point-person for CAP			●
1.1.2		Encourage synchronous but non-competing events in all municipalities		●	
1.1.3		Explore potential to coordinate event calendars among organizations		●	
1.1.4		Explore the possibility of bundling cultural activities and programs with accommodation and dining offers (including to promote off-season activities)		●	
1.1.5		Encourage municipalities to organize activities that showcase several organizations with similar goals, such as an art crawl, a garden tour, or an orchard trail		●	
1.1.6		Help facilitate regional shuttles and/or coordinate rideshares to events (including but not limited to senior citizens)	●		
1.2	Expand the use of County-owned spaces and increase the visibility of Libraries and Museum/Archives as resource centres				
1.2.1		Make County Museum and Libraries’ space available for skill share workshops such as website design, social media, event organization and business management for not-for-profit organizations			●
1.2.2		Use a streamlined booking system to make County-owned spaces more widely available to local organizations		●	
1.2.3		Conduct an audit of County-owned outdoor spaces, buildings, and rooms to gain a clear understanding of their suitability for different kinds of activities		●	
1.3	Foster an environment for successful cultural sector fundraising and grant applications				
1.3.1		Write reference letters to support funding applications		●	
1.3.2		Host grant writing workshops and skill sharing opportunities			●
1.3.3		Explore developing additional supports for cultural organizations such as a bank of document templates, including budgets, sponsorship requests, impact statements, newsletters, project timelines	●		
1.3.4		Promote BCPL’s grant database			●
1.3.5		Host networking and learning events for local cultural organizations and ensure youth participation		●	

			Not Started	In Progress	Complete
2.	Develop and Maintain Cultural Assets				
2.1	Promote diverse cultural representation by sharing lesser-known stories and encouraging new collaboration between cultural organizations				
2.1.1		Include local producers and historic markets Culture maps to promote the agrarian history and culture of the County			●
2.1.2		Host Cultural Symposium to connect cultural organizations for networking, learning, and collaboration		●	
2.1.3		Research best practices for implementing an inclusive interpretive panel program and share results with stakeholders	●		
2.1.4		Support and encourage involvement in cultural organizations with the local immigration partnership.	●		
2.2	Create and maintain County-level inventories of cultural places				
2.2.1		Provide a culture lens to mapping activities at Bruce County and explore potential to develop and maintain an interactive Culture Map	●		
2.2.2		Incorporate and maintain designated heritage structures into the County's GIS planning platform, with support from municipalities	●		
2.3	Establish and maintain a directory of cultural repositories in Bruce County and aggregate digital and physical resources from source organizations about local stories, artistic and architectural styles, and digital and physical archives.				
2.3.1		Explore need for a roundtable for county and local archivists and collection managers to assess data management needs, opportunities for co-development and further digitization of resources, and application for grants		●	
2.3.2		Create and maintain a county-wide public directory of diverse local archives, including Indigenous archives with a synopsis of their collections and areas of expertise provide			●
2.3.3		Digitize historic photos and create a public repository			●
2.3.4		Create and maintain a collection of publications by local organizations and authors			●
2.3.5		Realize the consolidation of Bruce County Archives off-site storage holdings into a common facility with sufficient additional space for anticipated growth		●	



			Not Started	In Progress	Complete
3.	Improve Cultural Communications				
3.1	Leverage Bruce County digital platforms to promote the visibility of cultural events and programs County-wide				
3.1.1		Create a higher profile events calendar through Explore the Bruce	●		
3.1.2		Explore ways to facilitate low maintenance online registration through Explore the Bruce for Bruce County events			●
3.1.3		Feature profiles of cultural events and organizations across the County, including links to website and social media pages; include digital space to celebrate past events		●	
3.1.4		Encourage and promote events for younger audiences including through the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre and the Bruce County Public Library			●
3.1.5		Explore potential to direct residents and visitors to the Explore the Bruce calendar through QR codes in community spaces	●		
3.1.6		In the events calendar, implement a wider variety of search filters (e.g. concerts, heritage events, outdoor/indoor, family-friendly, accessibility, etc); coordinate with Municipalities on use of common search tags	●		
3.1.7		Create a County-wide cultural passport to help uplift seasonal organizations	●		
3.1.8		Develop self-guided audio/mobile app tours for drivers, hikers, and pedestrians (augmented reality); when available, provide download links for local self-guided tours on Explore the Bruce (e.g. quilt trails)			●
3.2	Take advantage of Bruce County media and social media platforms to facilitate access to digital content				
3.2.1		Standardize county-wide hashtags for Cultural Services to promote social media aggregation and cross-referencing			●
3.2.2		Complete a Gap analysis of County social media accounts identifying the functions and mandates of existing accounts and platforms, potential for new accounts and platforms, and possible procedural efficiencies for cross-hosting and promoting content between accounts and platforms			●
3.2.3		Consider livestreaming local events and/or publishing recordings afterward (lectures, meetings, old exhibition tours, etc)			●
3.2.4		Leverage Explore the Bruce YouTube channel to broadcast locally made content including a possible short film contest			●
3.2.5		Create a plan for making all or parts of select digitized archival films, which are in the public domain and not subject to privacy restrictions, available through the Museum's YouTube channel, under the guidance of the Museum Marketing Plan, Digital Content Strategy, and Digitization Plan.		●	
3.3	Facilitate communication between local groups and businesses within and across municipalities				
3.3.1		Create an email distribution group for cultural promotions across municipalities			●
3.3.2		Encourage commercial spaces (such as farmer's markets, restaurants, and bars) to advertise cultural events			●
3.3.3		Organize networking events among like-minded organizations to promote partnerships in different municipalities; events could be held around themes such as youth engagement, successes of the last year, making room for the arts, cultural heritage preservation, etc.		●	
3.3.4		Encourage partnerships with regional universities and community colleges with respect to work and volunteer placements and graduate research projects		●	
3.3.5		Coordinate with municipalities, parks, and conservation authorities on improving heritage-related trail systems and water access (e.g. historic portage routes), including through integrated cultural interpretation programming (such as wayfinding and heritage signage)	●		

		Not Started	In Progress	Complete
4.	Implement Coordinated Cultural Planning			
4.1	Ensure accountability on implementation of the CAP and monitor cultural vitality			
4.1.1	Develop and administer a review process for the CAP recommended actions by County staff - adjust timelines, identify completed objectives, and evaluate and apply metrics regarding the effectiveness of completed objectives; to be reviewed by Council			●
4.1.2	Hold a virtual symposium about cultural planning successes with local organizations and individual stakeholders/creators; announce this event at CAP Kick-off			●
4.1.3	Design and administer a survey on the state of Culture in Bruce County to keep track of successes, challenges, and trends in heritage, culture, and arts sectors; generate a report that is shared with municipalities			●
4.1.4	Develop a directory of contacts including storytellers, dancers, musicians, and artists for cultural performances, ceremonies, and events	●		
4.1.5	Share best practices by highlighting successful municipal cultural planning cases (e.g. creative use of heritage buildings)	●		
4.2	Foster municipal initiatives and policies that are mutually reinforcing			
4.2.1	Hold biannual cultural planning meetings with representatives of each municipality		●	
4.2.2	Conduct a gap analysis of municipal cultural incentive programs such as façade improvement programs, film and digital production incentives, and other cultural sector grants; coordinate with municipalities on the development of new programs		●	
4.2.3	Form an exploratory committee to investigate the process to designate heritage properties, landscapes, and districts in Bruce County.	●		
4.3	Develop a Bruce County Cultural Perspective (BCCP) with a view to cultural integration and communication			
4.3.1	Audit County communications for inclusive language and terminology, including gender and other self-identifying options			●
4.3.2	Appreciate the distinction between seasonal and permanent residents when making cultural planning decisions, for example, taking into account the changing demographic profile of the region over the year			●
4.3.3	Adopt official plan policies that encourage the lower-tier municipalities to develop their own official plan policies specific to Municipal Cultural Planning		●	
4.3.4	Develop a County Public Art Policy including a program to require and display art by local creators in public spaces; include and update artwork and photographs in County buildings to reflect the diverse heritage, culture, and artistic expressions of Bruce County, and encourage municipalities to do the same	●		
4.3.5	Ensure County cultural planning consultation provides opportunity for youth feedback and representation		●	
4.3.6	Develop programs aimed at engaging seasonal youth visitors in temporary employment at cultural events and organizations (see Bruce Peninsula National Park model)		●	
4.3.7	Develop a program for students involving the cross-generational recording of stories to be hosted on relevant County platforms	●		





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