

Richmond benefits from thriving arts scene

By Bill McNulty
Councillor

The development of a thriving arts and cultural sector in Richmond is a key Council Term Goal and we're making great strides toward achieving that goal.

The Richmond Arts Strategy—first created in 2004 and updated in 2012—along with our 2010 Olympic Arts and Cultural Program, have acted as catalysts for an explosion in local arts events, programs and activities.

Popular programs like the Children's Arts Festival, Culture Days, the Minoru Chapel Opera Series, the Richmond Youth Dance Academy and Writer-in-Residence programs at the Richmond Cultural Centre have all sprung up in the last few years and quickly become popular fixtures on the local cultural calendar.

The Richmond Cultural Centre has gone through a series of modest renovations, which have brought us the New Media Lab and its programs for youth and public, a new performing arts theatre space and the new rooftop garden space for events and programs.

City Council also created a new annual arts, culture and heritage grants program in 2012 to assist local arts groups in their development. For 2014, the third year of this program, Council awarded more than \$100,000 in grants, all funded from casino revenues so there is no financial impact on taxpayers.

We work closely with local arts groups such as Cinevolution to present events such as the Your Kontinent: Richmond International Film and Media Arts festival, which is rapidly evolving into a must-see summertime event. Council also supported last year's return engagement of *Salmon Row*, which enjoyed another sold out run at Britannia Shipyards, National Historic Site.

We are working with the development community to create new artist live-work studios with the first such facilities to be included in new projects in the Capstan Village area.

Richmond also continues to be home to one of Canada's most robust public art programs, which is primarily funded through developer contributions. We now have 110 completed public art installations across Richmond and more on the way. Our public art programs have grown to include online public art walking tours, the popular Pecha Kucha lecture nights, participation in the Cultural Biennale and other unique events and programs.

These new programs and events build on a strong, existing foundation that Richmond already had through our established cultural institutions such as the Gateway Theatre, Richmond Art

Gallery and Richmond Arts Centre, which are award-winning nationally-recognized facilities that do a great job of engaging our community in the arts. The Richmond Maritime Festival, the mainstay of our annual arts events program, celebrated its 10th anniversary last year with a record 40,000 attendance. The popular Lulu Series of arts-related lectures and performances continues to draw strong attendance.

A strong arts and cultural sector adds to community vibrancy and enriches the quality of life in Richmond by providing opportunities for our residents to be involved, engaged, entertained and enlightened.

Furthermore, the arts and cultural sectors are also important contributors to our economy. A recent report by the Cultural Board of Canada found that a dynamic cultural sector is a magnet for economic prosperity. Increased arts activities creates jobs and generates additional investment and spending within communities. More than 1,400 people are employed in the local arts and economic sector. These are mostly locally-based jobs with low environmental impact, but high social and economic benefit, which supports our goal of being a sustainable community. On a provincial basis, spending on cultural goods and services is more than \$3.6 billion annually, so it is an economic engine we want to continue to nurture and grow.

One of the ways we celebrate our success is the annual Richmond Arts Awards. Established in 2009, the awards recognize the achievements in and contributions to the arts by Richmond residents, artists, educators, organizers and business leaders in six categories and honouring all artistic disciplines. Nominations for this year's awards have just closed and finalists will be announced next month. The awards will be presented on May 6. I'd like to invite you all to join us as we celebrate our community's remarkable achievements in the arts. Watch for more details in this newspaper soon.