

## Creative Newfoundland and Labrador – An Analysis

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The release on March 28, 2006 of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's plan – *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador: The Blueprint for Development and Investment in Culture* (<http://www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2006/culturalplan2006.pdf>) was widely reported in the media. Most of the coverage focussed on the additional \$18 million in cultural spending announced by Premier Danny Williams. (<http://www.cbc.ca/nl/story/nf-arts-blueprint-20060329.html>). However, welcome as the extra money was, there is another, less evident aspect of this story that makes it of interest to the cultural policy research community.

In the long run, the real impact of *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador* may lie in the extent to which it recognizes and responds to many of the most prominent cultural policy issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Take, for example, this statement from the "Introduction" to the *Blueprint*:

... when we invest in professional artists and the creative process we are supporting research and development in the cultural sector and the creative economy as a whole. (p. 11)

The authors of the *Blueprint* were clearly familiar with the work of Richard Florida on the creative economy (<http://www.creativeclass.org>) which links economic vitality to the presence of creative people in a community. Creativity and the new economy was one of the areas examined in our *In Focus* on "Creative Cities", which is accessible at [http://www.culturescope.ca/ev\\_en.php?ID=3790\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.culturescope.ca/ev_en.php?ID=3790_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC) for those who would like to know more about this important topic. Newfoundland has obviously heard the message and has responded with strategies on the "Creative Workforce and Career Development (pp.28-29), on "Creative Communities and Regions" (pp. 22-23) and on "Cultural Industries and Creative Enterprises (p.p. 36-37) that address both the needs of the creative class and communities they live in.

Another strong cultural policy theme that runs through *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador* is the idea of sustainable cultural activity. It is becoming more commonly recognized that there are **four** pillars to sustainability – environmental, social, economic and cultural. The role of the fourth pillar – culture – in sustainable community development is little understood but has become a popular policy research focus (see, for example, the work of Jon Hawkes at <http://culturaldevelopment.net/downloads/FourthPillarSummary.pdf>).

This topic was also covered in a Culturescope *In Focus* feature on "Sustainable Communities: Culture, Creativity and Inclusiveness" (accessible at [http://www.culturescope.ca/ev\\_en.php?ID=8603\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.culturescope.ca/ev_en.php?ID=8603_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)). The Newfoundland and Labrador government appears to have taken this type of research into account in the development of its Strategic Direction Two on "Creative Communities and Regions" (pp. 22-23), the goal of which is "To make our province's arts and heritage accessible to everyone and to ensure that culture is seen as something with which the whole of society can identify and engage, and from which we can all derive benefits" (p. 23). The *Blueprint* is particularly notable for the attention paid to the role of culture in sustaining rural economies and minority communities.

The *Blueprint* also takes into account the need to sustain cultural diversity in the province – a topic that has received a great deal of attention in policy circles in recent years (see for example UNESCO's *World Culture Report on Cultural Diversity* at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/worldreport/>). Strategic Direction Three addresses the cultural needs of “Aboriginal Peoples and Communities”, which “...recognizes the distinctive contributions of Aboriginal peoples to our cultural diversity” (p.24). In our recent *In Focus* on “Indigenous Knowledge” ([http://www.culturescope.ca/ev\\_en.php?ID=9461\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.culturescope.ca/ev_en.php?ID=9461_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)), we examine the benefits and challenges of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the policy discourse. It is encouraging that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has acknowledged that Aboriginal concepts of culture differ from Eurocentric ones and that the goal will be “To ensure that members of Aboriginal communities direct and control Aboriginal cultural preservation and development” (p. 25).

Finally, it is worth noting the *Blueprint's* emphasis on the role of cultural tourism in sustaining and promoting the unique aspects of life in Newfoundland and Labrador. In its Strategic Direction Nine on “Cultural Tourism”, the report states that ‘Linking our arts and heritage to tourism celebrates the many aspects of both our heritage and our contemporary artistic expression while at the same time it offers an opportunity of preserving and protecting them’ (p. 40). We noted in our *In Focus* on “Culture and Tourism” that, “While tourism has traditionally been viewed with a strictly economic lens, tourism policies today take a wider view, including its social, cultural and ecological dimensions.” ([http://www.culturescope.ca/ev\\_en.php?ID=8191\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.culturescope.ca/ev_en.php?ID=8191_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)). In keeping with this holistic approach, the *Blueprint* vows to “continue to develop this activity while preserving artistic integrity, cultural distinctiveness and authenticity as well as our natural environment” (p. 40).

*Creative Newfoundland and Labrador: The Blueprint for Development and Investment in Culture* is a landmark report in many ways. By taking what it refers to as “a balanced approach to cultural development across a broad spectrum of needs and opportunities” (p. 15), the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has provided a “blueprint” not only for itself, but also for other jurisdictions seeking to understand and support cultural development within their borders.

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