
"Arts and culture is one of the very few plausible hedges against the volatility of an economy based on resources." - Frank Barry

Budget Cuts a Blow to the Labrador Arts Community

by Robin McGrath

The recent provincial budget has had a disproportionate impact on artists of all kinds living in Labrador. The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay will be closed effective May 4th and the Labrador Cultural Outreach Officer, Donna Roberts has been given her layoff notice.

The Labrador Cultural Travel Fund, which provided travel assistance to residents of Labrador to participate in arts and heritage activities on the island portion of the province, and assisted Labrador organizations to bring in resource people from the island for seminars, workshops and similar events, will no longer be available.

Roberts says the impact of the office closure will be felt for a long time. All other ArtsNL programs will continue to be offered to artists and arts organizations and groups in the province and while she feels it is wonderful that there were no other impacts to the artists in the province, the strong link between Labrador and Newfoundland has been lost. The access to arts and cultural opportunities that both professional and non professional artists will have will be diminished because of the cost of getting there and Labrador artists will once again take a back seat to their provincial counterparts because some won't be able to afford to travel to those opportunities.

Roberts believes the Labrador arts community will thrive...it always has. Labrador artists will still be nominated and receive provincial, regional and national recognition and as a region artists will ensure the growth of the arts in Labrador. "As artists, we are already too heavily invested. But those artists who are new and emerging, those artists who are too young yet to have a voice, those heritage organizations that needed the professional development...these were all supported by the Labrador Cultural Travel Fund ...that is the greatest loss. My heart breaks for those people."

Roberts said she absolutely loved her job with ArtsNL and is very sad that she will no longer be working so closely with such amazing artists. Many Labrador artists believe that the greatest loss will be Roberts herself, as she always went the extra mile to help artists and arts organizations in her region to access the information and programs they needed.



Dorothy's Crafts in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is one of the few retail outlets for artists remaining in Labrador. Photo by Robin McGrath.