

February 28, 2011

Salt Spring school/centre for the Arts Steering Committee: Annual Report

Committee Members: Seth Berkowitz, Joi Freed-Garrod, Janet Halliwell, Rineke Jonker, Bob Leatherbarrow, Liesbeth Leatherbarrow, Georgia Taylor Proctor

The School/Centre for the Arts Steering Committee, created last summer after the very successful Chairity fundraiser, has been hard at work since September exploring the feasibility of establishing a school/centre of the arts on Salt Spring. From the start we realized that the task at hand was a complex one and that it would require a methodical, multi-pronged approach. At our semi-monthly meetings we identified what such an ambitious initiative would entail and focused on carrying out a thorough examination and evaluation of the identified issues. Our discussions and research assignments covered such diverse but interrelated topics as potential school/centre catchment area, potential audience, potential school models, potential economic and creative upsides and downsides to Salt Spring (its residents in general and the artistic community in particular), and much more. We also initiated an informal round of feedback from a small group of locals outside the SSAC and the committee about their vision of an arts school/centre and how to get there.

We are now poised to move into the phase of community engagement. The Steering Committee has received applications in response to our "Request for Proposals" for a person experienced with community engagement to plan, organize and facilitate community conversations this spring. A set of 7 potential school models will be winnowed down to 2 or 3 for the purposes of these discussions, which will involve both town hall sessions and focus groups. An inventory of existing arts schools/programs in the region and detailed assessments of each model will underpin this community engagement activity.

By the fall of 2011, the Steering Committee will be in a position to recommend to the SSAC a preferred arts school/centre model for Salt Spring. If the SSAC accepts the committee's recommendation and is ready to move forward, then the next step for the committee will be to create a business model for the school's operation, as per the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Respectfully submitted
Liesbeth Leatherbarrow
Chair, Steering Committee
Salt Spring school/centre for the Arts