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**Cultivating a Creative Ecology from the Artists' Perspective:  
Evidence from Saskatchewan**

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Richard Florida must be credited for making such perceptions widely understood, but he was not the first to talk about a creative economy or about the importance of cities to a creative economy. However, others had situated that concept at a corporate or organizational level as a by-product of the cultural industries.

What was new about Florida's work was that he focused in more broadly on individuals who composed creative clusters and a creative class and identified the role cities play as catalysts in fostering creativity.

“Cities have always been important engines of economic growth, but they are assuming an even greater importance in today's knowledge-driven innovation economy, in which place-based ecosystems are critical to economic growth. [...] Cities are not just containers for smart people; they are the enabling infrastructure where connections take place, networks are built, and innovative combinations are consummated.” – Richard Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class Revisited*

Photo: City of Saskatoon



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The 3 T's he identified as contributing to creative cities--talent, tolerance, and technology--have since been augmented with a 4th T--'territorial assets'--and his creative class has expanded to potentially include blue collar workers and virtually any community, but fundamentally even in *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited* (2012) Florida's theories remain heavily grounded in the assumption that connections, networks and "innovative combinations" of creative types are the building blocks of creative cities and creative economies.

## Creative Economies, Creative Cities

“When talented and creative people come together, the multiplying effect is exponential; the end result is much more than the sum of the parts. Clustering makes each of us more productive--and our collective creativity and economic wealth grow accordingly.” (Florida)

*Photo: City of Saskatoon; Mural Mayfair by Josh Jacobson*



Yet even in that revised work, Florida is short on the details of exactly how these connections and networks function--specific examples of how artists and others in the creative class form and use “innovative combinations.”

The theory and concept are compelling but also frustrating for city planners charged with creating a productive economic climate, for arts and cultural administrators charged with cultural development and for both emerging and professional artists who don't feel connected with or situated within a creative environment and don't see themselves as part of, contributing to or benefitting from a creative economy. As put very simply by Simon Brault shortly after becoming the Director and CEO at the Canada Council: “We need to better understand what works and why” (Address to the Conference of the Social Theory, Politics and the Arts Conference, Ottawa, October 2014. p7).

## Creative Economies, Creative Cities

- “We need to better understand what works and why.” (Simon Brault, *Address to the Conference of the Social Theory, Politics and the Arts Conference, Ottawa, October 2014.*)
- “Great thinkers, artists, and entrepreneurs rarely come out of nowhere. They cluster and thrive in places that attract other creative people and provide an environment that fosters and supports creative effort.” (Florida)

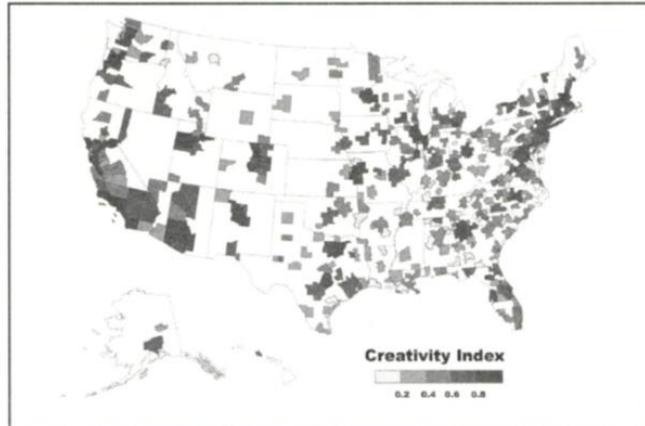


*Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work*  
Photo: Courtesy of Carey Shaw

How do talented and creative people come together in cities? How are clusters formed? How does clustering actually work? How do you know whether a given city offers “an environment that fosters and supports creative effort”?

## Creative Economies, Creative Cities

- How do you know whether a given city offers “an environment that fosters and supports creative effort”?



Florida Creativity Index

Source: Analysis by Kevin Stolarick. Map by Zara Matheson. See the appendix for full detail on sources.

Suppose a city has by policy or chance assembled the 4 T's of talent, tolerance, technology and territorial assets--how do you know that networks and connections are working productively in that context? And if they aren't what mechanisms if any can you use to foster those productive connections?

Florida offers several empirical indicators that can be used to measure an area's creativity factor, but not much more practical guidance on addressing most of those questions.

## Creative Ecologies, Creative Cities

- “Creative centers provide the integrated ecosystem or habitat where all forms of creativity--artistic and cultural, technological and economic--can take root and flourish.” (Florida)
- “It is the configuration of relationships that gives a system its essential characteristics. Thus it is less helpful to define the creative economy by what it does, than to try to understand how it is organized... Creativity comes from being at a point of exchange.” (Robert Hewison, Cultural Historian)

Because Florida justifies, in some cases quite tenuously, all of the social and cultural factors that he identifies as contributing to a creative city in terms of the creative economy, it is also difficult to assess the value or success of some of these factors like tolerance and diversity in economic terms.

However, although his ultimate measurement remains economic vigor Florida has increasingly embraced ecological thinking that moves towards broader concepts of the value and importance of creativity and more of a focus on how a cultural ecology is organized around relationships rather than simply what it achieves economically.

By referring to creative communities as ecosystems Florida is alluding to the work of other scholars who see the creative economy as just one component of much wider creative and cultural ecosystems and a broad system of networks and symbiotic relationships as described here by Ann Markussen:

An arts and cultural ecology encompasses the many networks of arts and cultural creators, producers, presenters, sponsors, participants, and supporting casts embedded in diverse communities. Forty years ago, scientists and policymakers realized that treating plants, animals, minerals, climate, and the universe as endlessly classifiable, separate phenomena did not help people understand or respond to environmental problems. So they created the integrated field of environmental ecology. In similar fashion, arts producers, advocates, and policymakers are now beginning to strengthen the arts and cultural sphere by cultivating a view of its wholeness and interconnectedness... We define the arts and cultural ecology as the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings (2011, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*)

## Creative Ecologies, Creative Cities

- "We define the arts and cultural ecology as the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings."

(Ann Markussen, 2011, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*)



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Last Mountain Lake Cultural Centre



determine how the system is organized and how it functions. As Simon Brault just noted in his keynote address, “we need to find ways to name, articulate, document and bring attention to the attributes of the arts.”

## Creative Ecologies, Creative Cities

- “It is more helpful to understand culture in terms of how it is organized, rather than simply stating what it does. The use of ecological metaphors creates a rich way of discussing culture, and different perspectives then emerge. New taxonomies, new visualisations, and fresh ways of thinking about how culture operates will help promote a rich, diverse and fruitful cultural ecology.” (Holden)



Photo: City of Saskatoon; Moose Jaw Trail sculpture by Jill Anholt; animation by SUM Theatre

Brault called for Canadians to be leaders in creativity on the world stage, and that is precisely what we have been doing in Saskatchewan. Anticipating Holden’s call for ecological research by several years, the three major arts organizations in Saskatchewan--the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, the Saskatchewan Arts Board and SaskCulture--came together in 2012 to form a research partnership with the University of Regina.

### SPAR – Partners

Formed in 2012 for research to support evidence-based programming and policy-making for the arts.

First Research Project:

*Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan*

- funded by the SPAR partners and the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)*.



All three arts organizations had commissioned various studies, some of which were publicly available and some not, and they had a wealth of data and anecdotal information from arts administrators concerning arts organizations and related facilities, but they lacked good information about provincial artists, how they worked, the types of connections they formed inside and outside the arts and the perceptions of the general public regarding artists and the arts as well as their level of participation and engagement in culture.

## Creative Ecologies, Creative Cities

- “An overall ecosystem is viewed as a pattern of coordination amongst all the lives within it.” (Goetz Bachmann, et al 2012)
- “Culture consists of moments when people and things come together in concatenations, ‘flowerings,’ events and assemblages.” (Holden)



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Daniel Pytlyk

Consequently, in 2013 the Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts research launched its first research project “Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan” with a double focus on consulting with artists as well a wide range of other individuals in their communities not usually seen as members of the “arts sector” but now clearly implicated in the concepts of arts and creative ecologies which place artists side by side with other members of the creative class and the public at large as creators of culture.

The study was immediately motivated by recent debilitating disruptions to the arts sector as well as the call in a 2010 report done by Marnie Badham for the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance in which she called for:

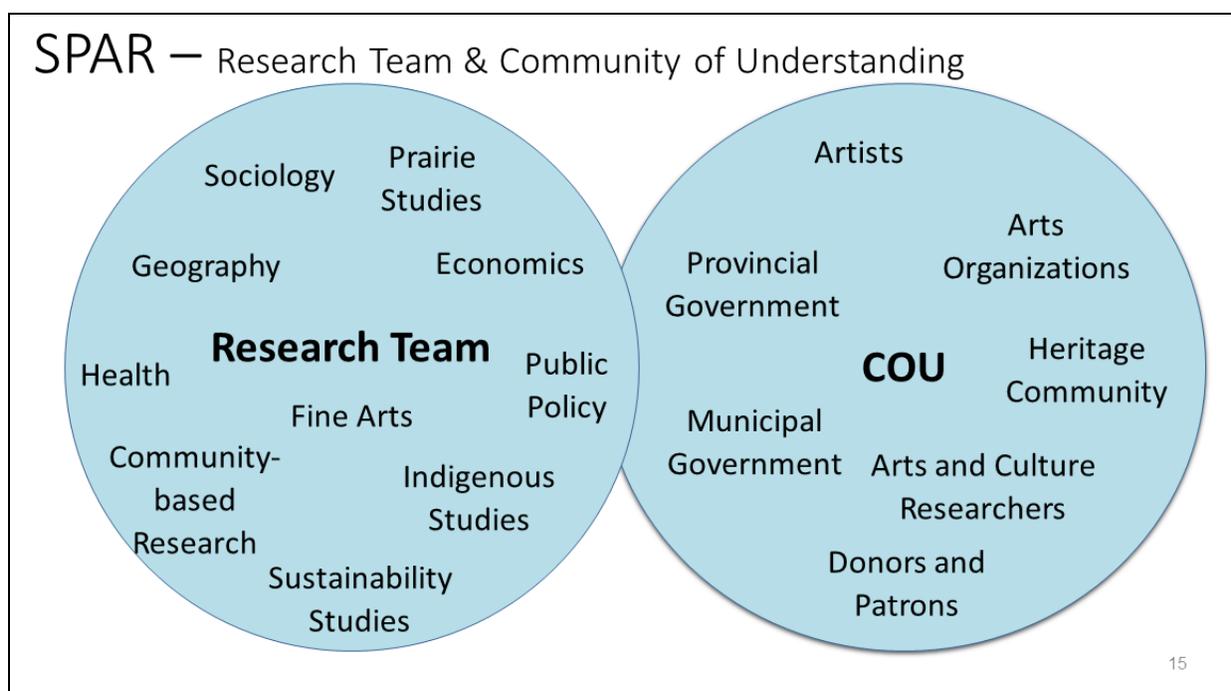
a coordinated effort from arts leaders, policy makers, and the private sector to develop a framework that is informed by research expertise from many disciplines including the arts, but also public policy, economics and sociology. This approach will also help us collect better data, both qualitative and quantitative, about the arts and their relationship to our lives and our environment. Over time, this would not only tell us more about the arts, but about

how the public feels about the arts, and will help to inform better policy decisions (p19).

Thanks to funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council as well as each of the partners, the study began with simultaneous surveys of both artists and the Saskatchewan public. We have now progressed from a wealth of quantitative data and qualitative input resulting from those surveys to focus groups and face-to-face consultations involving both artists and their communities which are in part intended to achieve the kind of community engagement advocated here by Simon Brault.

For SPAR this process began in its Community of Understanding, an advisory group representative of stakeholders in the arts ecology which includes not only artists but also city planners and developers from our major cities, heritage representatives, arts patrons, and government representatives.

The multidisciplinary research team has also diversified the ecological perspectives brought to bear on the study with researchers drawn not only from the arts but also health, law and justice, geography, sociology and sustainability studies, indigenous studies, and economics.



So what have we learned that can be helpful to people outside Saskatchewan--and in particular people concerned with fostering a creative climate in their city and more generally with urban planning and development in Canadian cities? As it turns out, our research participants were eager to share a wealth of information, and consequently I have a lot I could share regarding the networks and connections necessary for a vital, healthy and sustainable creative ecology. Within today's short timeframe, however, I

have chosen to provide insights that come primarily as a result of our artist surveys with some reference to comparative data for the public surveys.

Perhaps the most fundamentally important information to come from the research process so far addresses the basic demographics of the artists who Florida identifies as such important components of his critical creativity factor: talent.

## Creative Ecologies: Basic Questions

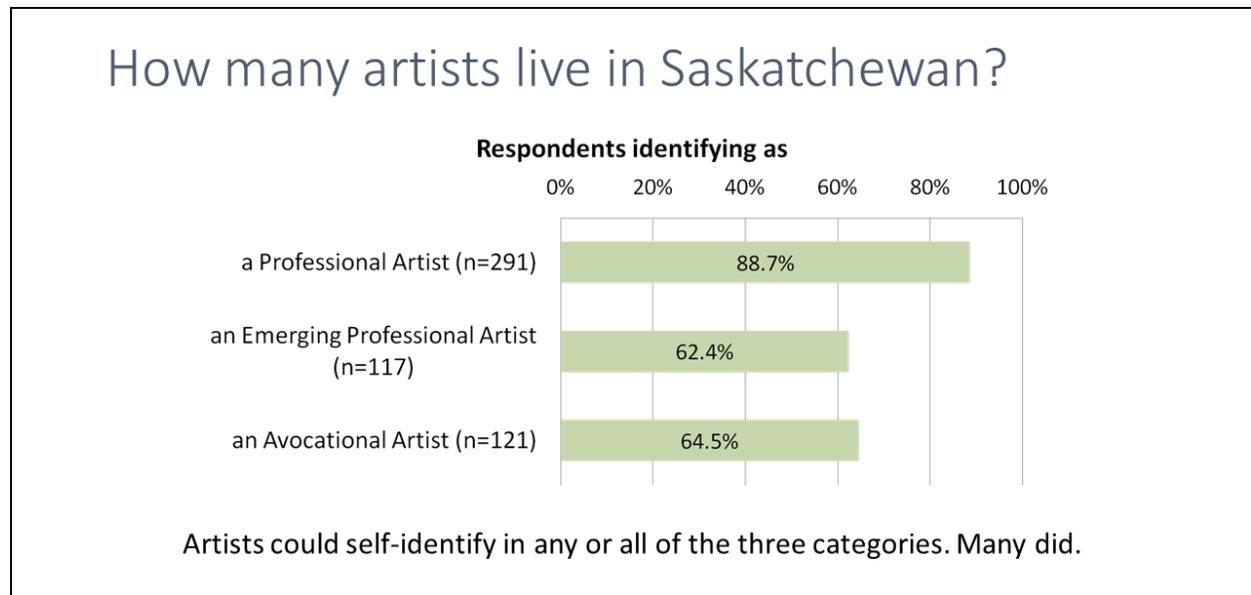
- How many artists are there?
  - professional?
  - emerging?
  - amateur?
- Who are they and where do they live and work?



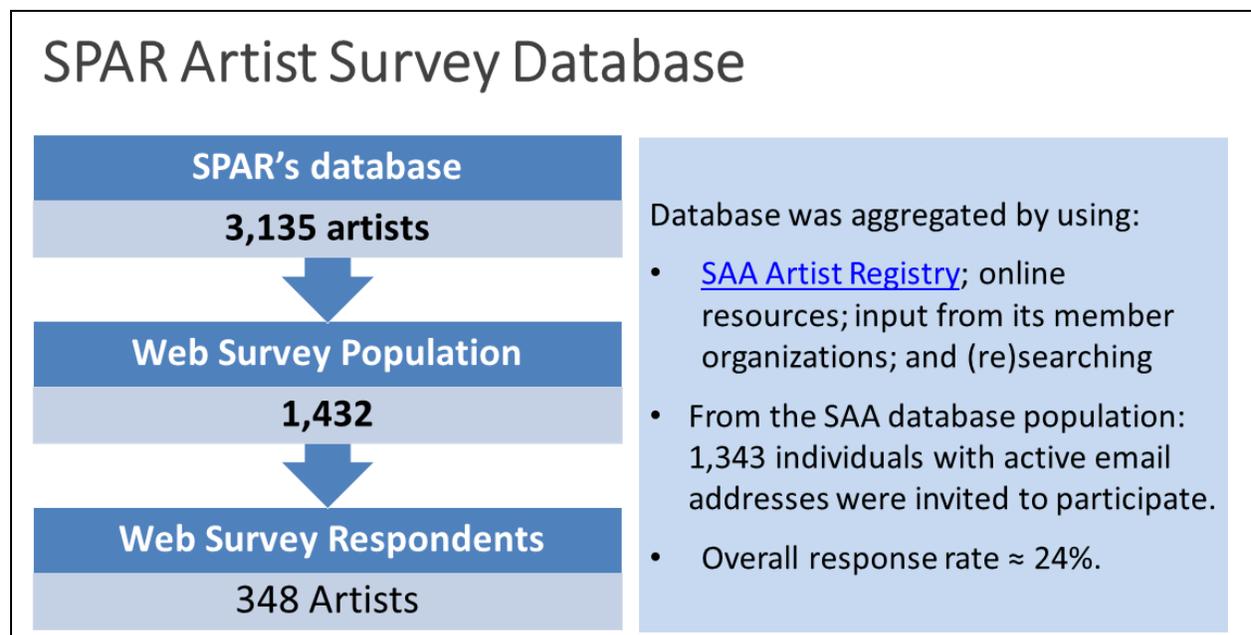
Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Michell Brownridge

In your own home base do you know how many artists live there, who they are, where they live and work? Could you answer this question with respect to professional, emerging, and amateur artists?

These are pretty basic questions--and one would think, pretty important for anyone engaged in advocating for or creating programs and policies affecting artists but prior to our research our partners had no answers to these questions beyond those available through Statistics Canada data--census, household survey and labour force survey results.



These questions are fraught with definitional challenges associated with the terms “professional”, “emerging,” and “amateur” which fluctuate depending on which funding agency you are dealing with or whether you are using provincial status of the artist legislation, Stats Can federal criteria or United Nations definitions. What we learned, though, is that you cannot rely on Stats Can data for this information if you want a clear picture of the local arts ecology.



Apart from the general and troubling gaps in the coverage of the National Household Survey recently headlined in Macleans' Magazine, Stats Can fails to capture all artists because it determines the occupation of household survey respondents on the basis of what they spent the most time doing in a given week prior to the survey when many

artists might have been in between gigs and currently unemployed or working more hours at another job. Not only would those artists not have been counted as artists, but also teachers and professors who teach in the arts and are expected to undertake professional creative work in conjunction with that job are automatically classified as teachers, not artists, despite, for instance, the fact they might hold down a principal chair in a professional orchestra.

Holden observed, "Cities do more than just attract creative people and provide a broad environment or ecosystem for creativity; they stimulate it as well." According to Dean Keith Simonton, "first, they play a critical role in 'creative development.'" Creators must be exposed to role models, and mentors during adolescence and young adulthood.

### Cities and "creative development."

- "Cities do more than just attract creative people and provide a broad environment or ecosystem for creativity; they stimulate it as well... they play a critical role in 'creative development.' Creators must be exposed to role models, and mentors during adolescence and young adulthood." (Holden)
- "To the extent that such mentors are more likely to be found in urban areas, this apprenticeship phase will necessarily occur in city environments" (Simonton)

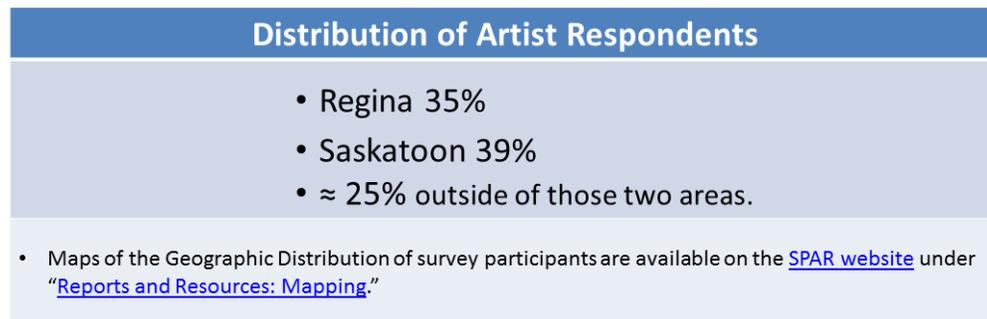


Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of the Government of Saskatchewan

When one considers the impact these Stats Can criteria can have on other collective demographic information such as educational background and income then it's clear that we need to use that data cautiously in answering these and other basic questions and in trying to understand the players and networks which compose any creative ecosystem.

It is interesting to begin by examining our statistics from the perspective of a commonly held assumption regarding the role cities play in creative development as articulated here by Holden and Simonton. Our respondents were fairly evenly split between Regina, Saskatoon and other more rural locations.

## Where do artists live and work?



The two major cities were clearly the most popular places for artists to live, and when it comes to training, cities in Saskatchewan and elsewhere may have played a key role in their evolution as artists.

However, interestingly, those artists living outside the two major centres actually reported a slightly higher level of education, so wherever they received training and mentorship, highly educated artists do not necessarily choose to remain in larger cities.

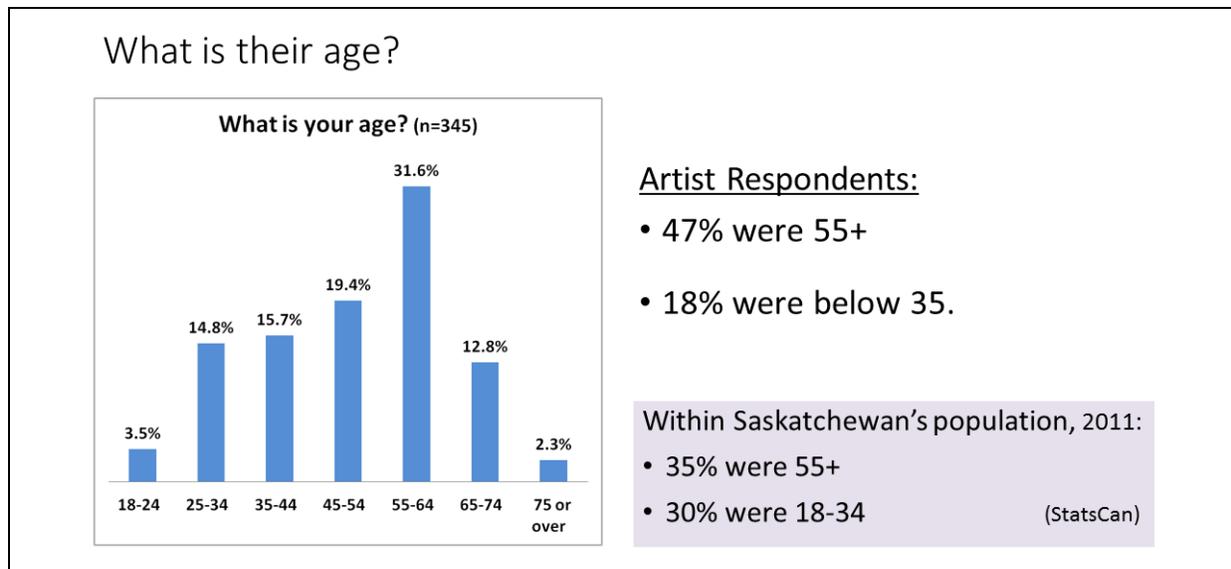
## What is their level of education?

### SPAR Artist Survey Respondents: 72% held a B.A. or higher

#### Other Education Numbers

Holding an undergraduate degree or higher:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of respondents, <i>Waging Culture</i> (2008 survey of Canadian visual artists)</li> <li>• 44% of Canadian artists (Kelly Hill, with NHS data)</li> <li>• 21% of the Canadian population (StatsCan, NHS data)</li> </ul>
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However, keeping in mind the distinctions between our criteria and those of Stats Can, one of the most stunning statistics to come out of our artist surveys is the very high level of education reported by artists overall, especially relative to the rest of the provincial population. Interestingly, this high level of education is consistent with at least one other national study of visual artists outside the Stats Can system.



While artists' high level of education may be a positive factor in Florida's creativity index, the average age of Saskatchewan artists which is well above the provincial average is not necessarily a good sign although the recent influx of newcomers to the province seems to have driven down the overall average age. From an ecological point of view, the comparatively lower number of artists below the age of 35 and the higher number of artists 55 and older raises some red flags with respect to long term sustainability of the creative ecology and is leading us to further consultation with artists in the younger age groups to determine whether this indeed is something we should be concerned about.

## Cities, Diversity, and Creativity

- "Early exposure to ideational diversity and conflict, [enables] the individual to engage in cultural *hybridization* or *cross fertilization* as an adult creator." (Simonton)
- "The more open a place is, the more likely it is to attract... people who power innovation and economic growth." (Florida)



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Matt Ramage

Florida: "The more open a place is, the more likely it is to attract the kinds of people who power innovation and economic growth. [...] Places that foster creativity through

the open flow of talent and skill] possess some underlying characteristics that allow individuals, including entrepreneurs, to readily mobilize resources. [...] They are oriented toward personal self-expression and openness to experience, which psychological studies show is a key characteristic of entrepreneurial behavior” (p 263).

Simonton: “Cities also stimulate creativity through “early exposure to ideational diversity and conflict, enabling the individual to engage in cultural ‘hybridization’ or ‘cross fertilization’ as an adult creator” (p 451 n25).

Richard Florida and others have emphasized that the presence of talented and well-educated people do not necessarily result in a creative city without another key combination--that of diversity and tolerance. Florida sees “cultural heterogeneity” (201 Florida) as critical to a creative environment.

## What is Their Cultural Background?

**Ancestry, SPAR artists:**

- Canadian 81.2%
  - British 6.3%
  - German 4.6%
  - French 4.3%

76% of Saskatchewan’s total population of European ancestry (2011, NHS)

**Birth Country, SPAR artists:**

- Canada 93.6%
- United States 2.7%
- United Kingdom 2.4%

92% of Saskatchewan’s total population born in Canada (2011, NHS)

Artist: Jinzhe Cui, Interpretation of 19<sup>th</sup> St. public art, Saskatoon



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In the past few years during the provincial economic boom, both urban and rural areas of the province have enjoyed an influx of newcomers many of whom have come from Asia, Africa or the Middle East. While the percentage of the population whose ancestry or background is neither European nor Indigenous remains small by comparison with centres like Vancouver or Toronto, there has been a cultural diversification of the province with impacts on not only the two largest cities but also smaller cities which had not previously had much experience with such diversity.

In his book *Who’s Your City*, Florida singled out the increase of new immigrants coming to Saskatoon, and in the spirit of a creative city Saskatoon has embraced this diversity by including key planks in its 2011 Culture Plan to “support and enable cross-cultural initiatives in the community” and “develop opportunities for diverse cultural expression in

civic spaces and places.” Some of the art work featured in this powerpoint reflects the City’s active implementation of programs to achieve its objective of positioning “the arts as a way to building bridges between cultures.”

All this being said, newcomers and individuals without European ancestry were virtually invisible in both artist and public surveys except for Indigenous artists who composed 9% of the artist respondents in comparison with the 16% of the provincial population that is Indigenous.

## “The Arts: Building bridges between cultures”

– City of Saskatoon Culture Plan

### Are you an Aboriginal person?

(First Nations, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit)

- 9% of SPAR artist respondents
  - **Regina** 2%
  - **Saskatoon** 4%
  - **Other** 3%
- Saskatchewan population of Aboriginal identity = 16%



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Carol Daniels

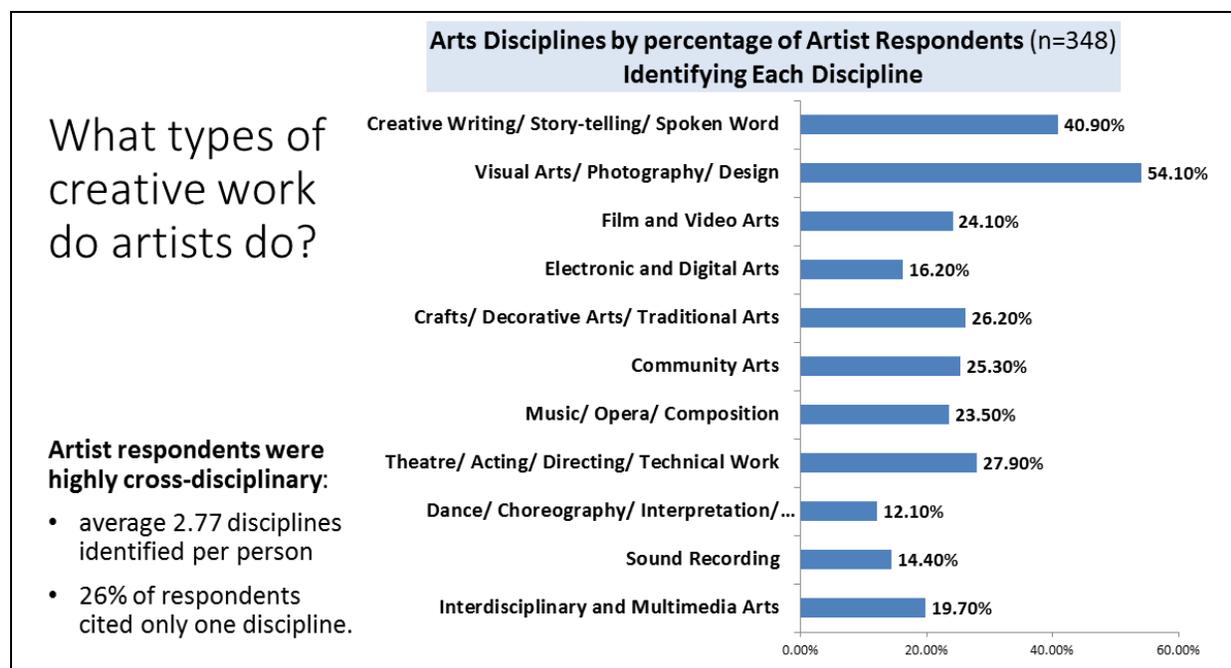
### Are newcomers included in the arts ecosystem?

- “I have found that Artists in Saskatchewan tend to be 'cliquey' and keep to their own small groups. We cannot think like that anymore. The world has grown smaller and is now on our very doorstep. What we do here in this province gets noticed everywhere. We have to open up more, work together, and stop being so closed off. As artists and as a people.”
- “The arts community in Saskatchewan is very much a word-of-mouth, networking community. It is very hard for newcomers to Saskatchewan to break into the arts community successfully without a strong network in place. There is no cohesive place to find opportunities and access to auditions and artist related information. It is very hard to get 'in'.”

- SPAR artist respondent

- SPAR artist respondent

Some of the newcomers who did respond commented about the “cliquey” environment and the difficulty of breaking into the arts in the province. It is hard to know how representative these isolated comments are, but given that our surveys were promoted most vigorously within the arts ecosystem by our arts partners as well as through the general media, it may be fair to say that the people who did respond to our surveys are an indication of who is connected to or feels as though they are a part of the province’s creative ecosystem and who does not. These findings actually further support a study released by SaskCulture just before our surveys were undertaken in which it was argued that artists, arts organizations and their programming were not sufficiently reflective of or adapting to the new provincial demographics. In the next week we will actually be meeting with a multi-cultural focus group of newcomer artists organized by the City of Saskatoon which should give us further input from this important group.



If complexity is an indicator for a healthy and sustainable ecosystem and diversity and tolerance foster a thriving creative community, then the highly cross and/or multidisciplinary character of art practices in Saskatchewan can be taken as an indicator of a vigorous creative ecosystem.

## Isolation breeds innovation?



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of the Government of Saskatchewan

- “Our relative isolation as compared to larger metropolitan centers has made the Saskatchewan arts community more innovative.”

- SPAR artist respondent

Although there has been a tendency to associate the blurring of old disciplinary distinctions and the crossing of traditional boundaries to invent new art forms with young and emerging artists, our survey responses suggest that in Saskatchewan at least this generative and innovative approach is embraced by older as well as younger artists. The same applied to the crossing and blurring of boundaries between professional, emerging and amateur artists already mentioned.

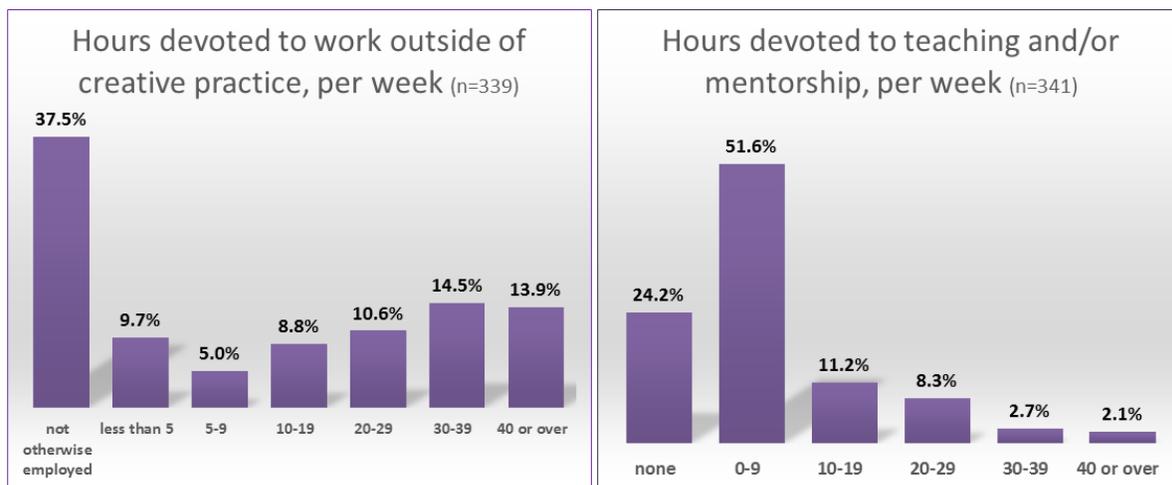
## Breaking down traditional disciplinary silos

[There is a] “great need to reach out to and make room for young artists for whom traditional disciplinary silos make less sense, for whom distinctions between professional and amateur are less and less clear, for whom art and business and technology and education and personal identities are all increasingly mashed up. We need to support these young artists as they invent new art forms, new business models and new distribution models for their work.”

(Brault)

As observed by one of our respondents, this may be a sign of artist adaptation to the particular nature of the Saskatchewan arts ecosystem, but it may also simply be reflective of a national and international trend towards the collapse of traditional disciplinary boundaries in the arts which is having an impact on programming and policy making at the Canada Council and elsewhere in Canada and beyond:

## What Other Work Do Artists Do?



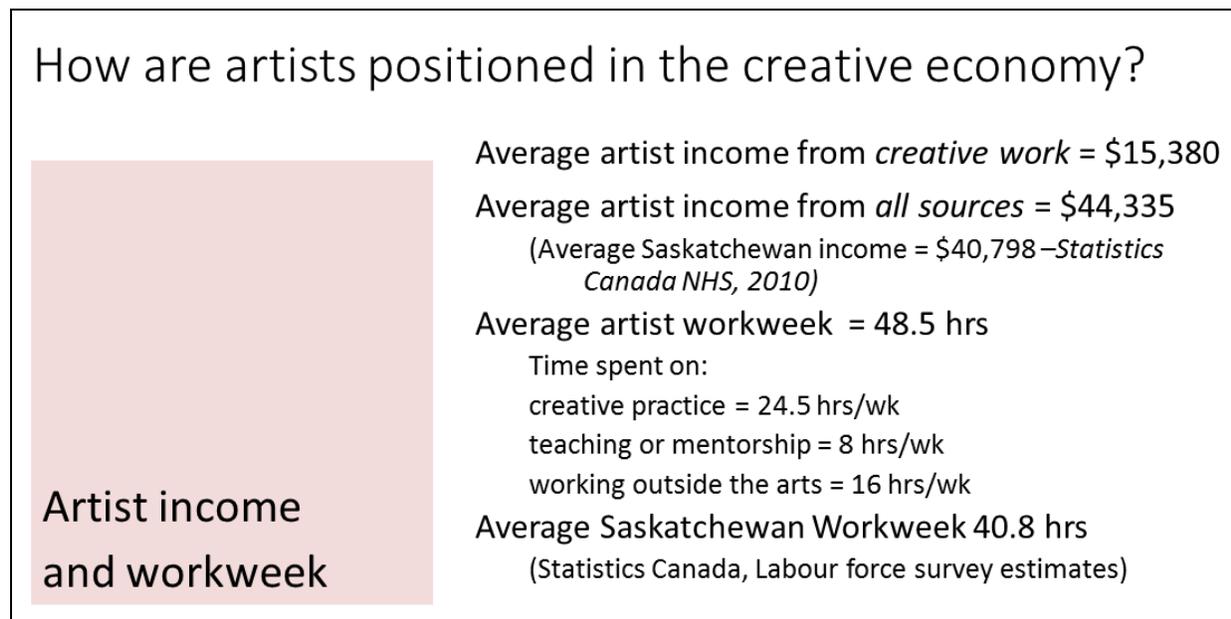
As observed earlier, in asking what artists did for work outside the arts we were able to open up new territory not previously acknowledged in Stats Can data, and the result yielded an important discovery. A significant portion of artists worked outside the arts--but many in occupations also associated with the creative class, occupations which also reflected an educational background and higher degrees outside the arts.

If anyone is wondering how artists and other members of the creative class are networking, it is clear from our data that they should not overlook the fact that for instance an artist and an information technology manager may be one and the same person.



much as professional artists as productive members of their local and cultural communities who are contributing skills such as creativity, leadership and mentorship holistically and contemporaneously. It was interesting to hear that perspective reinforced as well by the indigenous artist Jordan Coble this morning in his opening remarks.

With the buoyancy of Saskatchewan's economy until very recently, one might have looked for artists like others in the province to have been benefitting from the increased wealth, but when it comes to income from their creative practice, including grants, this is clearly not the case.



This really isn't a surprise to most of us, but when you look at their gross income from all sources it becomes clear that these artists are highly productive contributors to the economy. They have an above average income and their average workweek exceeds the provincial average by a good margin. Of course the critical question to be pursued in our current qualitative consultations is the extent to which artists are engaged in work outside the arts by choice or by necessity.

Artists made it clear in their survey responses that both formal networking and informal connections were important to their development as artists and their capacity to create work, and this quotation is just a short example of the many detailed responses we received when artists were given an opportunity to identify agencies, organizations, institutions, businesses, facilities, events and individuals who figured prominently in that network.

## How are artists positioned in the creative ecosystem?

Artists ranked networking/ informal connections as important to:

- 78% = overall evolution as an artist
- 62% = ability to create or interpret work

- "I have worked with a number of Saskatoon businesses to produce work, most recently: Don's Photo, Mondrian Hall, Globe Printers, Laser Impressions, Art Placement. I purchase materials and supplies from hardware stores (Home Depot, Rona, COOP) as well as Art Placement and Michaels."

- SPAR artist respondent

The extent to which this network reached out into the community beyond the immediate arts sector was further supported by information about artists' volunteer time commitments inside and outside the arts as well as by responses to the public survey which confirmed that artists were seen as integrated into their communities at a number of levels.

## How are artists positioned in the broader ecosystem?

### Volunteer Time across the Community

Percent of artist respondents contributing to:

- Arts and culture = 66%  
(exceeding the high provincial rate of 56%)
- Sports and recreation = 21%  
(2010 CDN volunteer rate = 12%)
- Education and research = 28%  
(2010 CDN volunteer rate = 10%)



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Matt Ramage

We also undertook a network density analysis of the artist data.

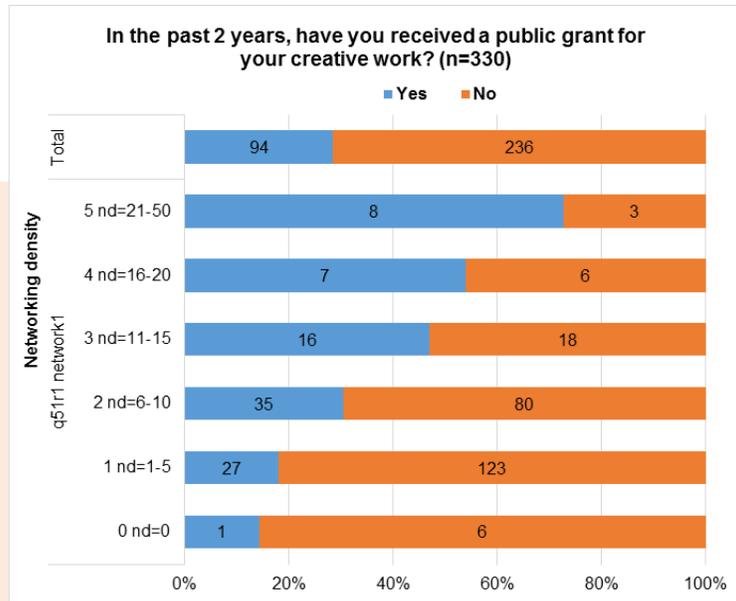
Although we can't necessarily assume a cause and effect relationship, our analysis showed a correlation between high networking density and, for instance, success at receiving grants or residence in a major city. This further suggests that the artists' perception of the importance of networking may indeed be correct.

### Artist networking density

• **28.5%** of SPAR artist respondents received a public grant for creative work in the last two years.

#### SPAR – Network Density

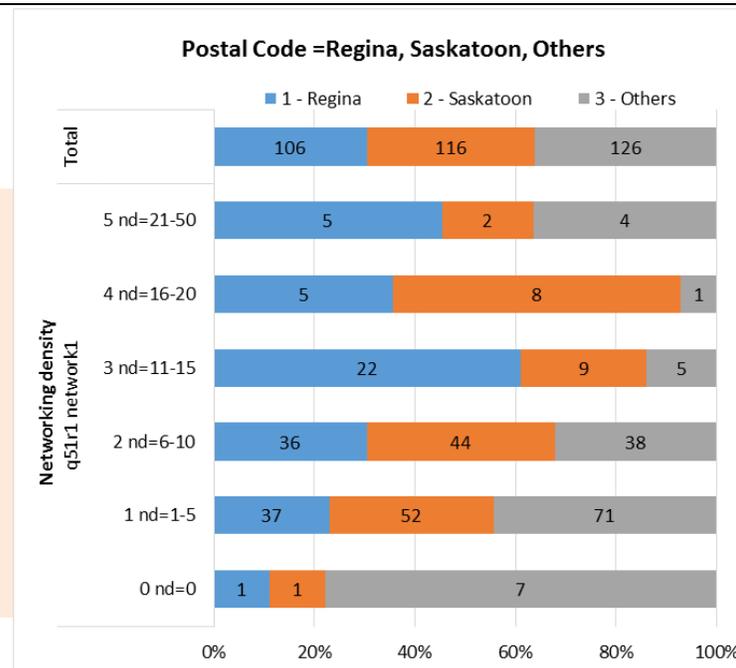
*This can be translated to the more networking the more likely to receive a grant.*



### Artist networking density

#### SPAR – Network Density

*The higher concentration of networking is within Regina and Saskatoon.*



From the perspective of cities there were some recurrent components in artist networks that people might not automatically expect to figure as prominently as they did.

## How are artists positioned in the creative ecosystem?

### Most mentions :

- Universities (general/total) = 172
- Saskatchewan Arts Board = 108

*“Other arts organizations, arts agencies, educational institutions or businesses connected with the arts or culture,” contributing to creative work/development as an artist*

Mentions	Organizations
172	<b>“University,” total mentions, including:</b> Saskatchewan Universities: U of Saskatchewan (various) = 78 - (includes Emma Lake/Kenderdine Campus = 14) U of Regina (various) = 67 FN Univ. (various) = 3
108	SAB Saskatchewan Arts Board
42	Canada Council
23	SaskCulture
17	Mackenzie Art Gallery; Persephone Theatre
16	Banff Center; SPC/Sask. Playwrights Centre; “None”
15	Globe Theatre
14	Emma Lake/Kenderdine Campus; OSAC/Organization of Saskatchewan Art Councils
13	“SIAST” (now Saskatchewan Polytechnic)
12	CARFAC; Creative City Centre; Mendel Art Gallery
11	SCC/Saskatchewan Craft Council

### Responses also included:

Various, specific organizations, listed 2-10 times = 161

Various, specific organizations, listed once = 557

For instance, libraries and schools are frequently mentioned, but by far the greatest number of repeat references were to universities, primarily departments or programs in one of the two institutions in Regina and Saskatoon. This number of references easily surpassed references to the Saskatchewan Arts Board, for instance. The universities appeared to be important not simply as a place for education or a place to teach. Residents in the two major cities placed a high importance on access to art facilities in educational institutions for making connections necessary to their creative work.

## How are artists positioned in the creative ecosystem?



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Bruce Vasselín

- 71% of artists saw their local context (e.g. their immediate natural environment, particular community or neighbourhood) as important in facilitating their creativity and art practice.

Finally, artists appeared to confirm the importance of another one of the T's in Florida's creative city equation--that of territorial assets. 71% of respondents saw their local context--their immediate natural environment, particular community or neighbourhood--as important in facilitating their creativity and art practice.

## Where are the strengths and successes?



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Ken McCaw

### **Public arts engagement, access, and participation (past 5 years):**

- **76%** often accessed "live performance"
- **65%** often accessed "sound recording"
- **64%** often accessed "printed formats such as books or magazines"

Taken together our surveys revealed signs of a generally healthy arts ecology both across the province and in specific communities. Apart from some of the artist data cited already, the public survey revealed a high rate of participation and level of engagement in the arts by both respondents and their children. At least for those individuals who responded to our public survey it would appear that "engagement" in the arts--what

people like Simon Brault and Doug Borthwick have called “a new social Imperative” is very much a characteristic of their relationship with artists.

## Where are the strengths and successes?

### **Artists and the Public on the importance of *the arts and artists' work*.**

Over 80% ranked them as important to:

- all levels of education *cultural diversity and development*
- knowledge and understanding of human behaviour
- the formation of personal identity, values and beliefs

Over 70% ranked them as important to:

- *the economy and development of the creative and innovative capacity of business or other professionals*

Over 80% of the Public ranked them as important to

- *a community's shared sense of place, health, well-being and sustainability.*

Both artists and the public placed a high importance on artists as contributors at various levels of society and culture with their contribution to three different stages of education topping the chart. Over 85 % of respondents saw artists' contributions to education as important and over 70% saw them as important contributors to the economy and the development of creative capacity and innovation.

Looking at some of the successes and strengths cited by community in our surveys we can get a more specific sense of the factors that are seen as contributing to a creative city from a grassroots perspective. Florida's 2012 creativity index for metropolitan centres in Canada ranked both Regina (tied for 12th) and Saskatoon (18th) in the top 20 and intriguingly our respondents also highlighted those two communities as offering creative assets.

Respondents from both communities included individuals who had recently moved back to the province and were energized by the increased creative energy. New and emerging arts organizations and venues and the accessibility of education and professional development in the arts were singled out in Regina as was the advantage rather than disadvantage of comparative isolation.

## Engaging Creative Cities

### Regina

- The emergence of small, independent theatre companies (such as Hectik and Golden Apple in Regina) has opened up opportunities to take on challenging and meaningful roles and productions, as has the programming of the Globe's Sandbox Series.
- We returned from BC two years ago, and was pleased to notice Regina has more arts-based organizations e.g. Creative City Centre, Paper Crane Community Arts, Slate Gallery, Cathedral Arts School, and more going on at The Artesian. [...] The City of Regina's pottery program was foundational to my work in ceramics. At the time I started, I was a single mother with a low income, so the program was very accessible for me because the city offset some of the cost. I had the opportunity to meet practicing ceramic artists and university students who taught classes as well as potter's guild members who took classes with me.
- Our size population wise and what some would consider lack of access to what is considered 'in the know of the art world' actually benefits [...] artists and [leads to stronger] artistic engagement [...] or more authentic voice.

- SPAR artist respondents



Photo: City of Regina

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From Saskatoon there was much emphasis on the influx of new and young artists and the increased appreciation for experimental work. Artist comments spoke directly to success with two key planks in the city's 2011 culture plan: attracting and retaining youth and ensuring a thriving and lively downtown.

## Engaging Creative Cities

### Saskatoon

- Specific to Saskatoon, the creative energy is high. Artists from other jurisdictions have moved, or are considering moving, here. This is a mixture of opportunity, activity, and energy, and a good mix of artistic experience.
- There is a growing younger artistic community in Saskatoon which is invigorating and essential to the breadth of a broader artistic community.
- Saskatoon [has grown] immensely... attendance at arts events grew as well, especially at arts events that were 'edgy' or 'experimental' or 'outside the box'. This has helped my creative practice because it gives what I am doing some context. Innovative performance work is rare in Saskatchewan, but slowly audiences in the province are realizing that this work is interesting and worth paying attention to.

- SPAR artist respondents



Artist: Jinzhe Cui; in meditation for 66 Physiognomies Project, Saskatoon

It should be noted that such enthusiast comments were not limited to Regina and Saskatoon. Artists were also enthusiastic about the creative assets offered by some of our smaller cities in Saskatchewan. In Lloydminster, for instance, community support for

artists, especially that of a particular business was credited with energizing that community and creating a vital hub of creative activity and community engagement.

## Engaging Creative Cities

- Lloydminster
- People have really started to recognize and value the arts. This has been the direct result of a local downtown business and its focus on the arts and our local Arts Without Borders/Streetscapes Streetfest in June. Social media has also played a part. The staff at the city run gallery - LCSC - is younger and have begun to use social media more effectively in the past 6 months. Other local businesses have begun to support the arts as a result.
- In Lloyd, we have a place called The Root: Community Emporium that is a restaurant, a live music venue, an art show & sale venue and a site that groups can rent studio space for classes or group sales. The Root has been very important and useful to the arts in Lloydminster.



- SPAR artist respondents

Of course respondent comments also identified a long list of gaps and weaknesses that need to be addressed to give them more opportunities to realize their creative ideas and ambitions.

Not surprisingly given the earlier statistics regarding average workweeks and creative income, money and time figured prominently on that list but those two things were more than balanced by other specific needs that are much more clearly and easily within the purview of programming and policy at the city level. In fact, city's may be in the best position to address the majority of outstanding needs expressed by our artists. Those needs underscored the importance of "things" within a cultural ecology as explained by Holden.

Where are gaps  
and/or weaknesses  
in the system?

Cities can address  
"things"

"Culture happens when people, with their ideas, skills and abilities, find the right opportunities. ..

In turn, opportunities are enabled by things: money, equipment, streets, buildings, objects. The opportunities are also aided or stifled by politics and policies. A cultural happening combines people, places, ideas, instruments, paint, and so on, and culture can only be explained by putting together things that were once thought of as different" (Holden)

Respondents noted that their own income had not risen at anywhere near the rate that housing and rental costs had risen in the booming economy. Consequently affordable housing and working space were very high on the list of needs. While working space included calls for 100-200 seat black box theatres available for new and/or small independent theatres in both major cities, the majority of requests were simply for publicly funded community space for communal studios, rehearsals, regular meetings, short courses and storage. Some of the requests were discipline specific, like "a 'writer's house' with a residency and space to write or share or teach classes; but other requests reflected the cross-disciplinary nature of so many of the artists that responded and called for that to be reflected in spaces that brought all types of artists together.

Where are gaps  
and/or weaknesses in  
the system?

Affordable living  
and working space

- "It would be amazing if there were a community site for artists of all disciplines to talk and share and collaborate."
- "We need an open, free place for independent artists to share work & training."
- "I wish there were more opportunities to work in 'creativity centres.'"

- SPAR artist respondents

When asked what mechanisms they used most commonly for networking, artists identified face to face contact and electronic contact almost equally as their preferred mode. Not surprisingly then, virtual space figured in artists' needs as well--especially when it comes to online resources directing people to events, products and simply the array of creative skills and talent available. Some of these requests were tied to more access to marketing specialists such as agents, performance booking agencies or publishing houses, but the primary idea behind the virtual space request seemed to be that information needed to be more widely available on the web.

<p>Where are gaps and/or weaknesses in the system?</p>  <p>Virtual Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Virtual space is important as is physical space.”</li> <li>• “We need a clearinghouse for all ethnic/cultural groups and art formats/mediums to list their resources, activities, events, 'calls' and future programs/directives like a 'Craig's List' of ARTS - all arts!</li> <li>• “[We need] an arts directory of some sort. Listings of arts events/happenings going on in the city, province, surrounding areas, all in one place, easily accessible.”</li> </ul> <p>- SPAR artist respondents</p>
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Ultimately, then, even expressed needs for actual working spaces and virtual space were frequently focused on better facilitating opportunities for networking and collaboration. The enormous importance of networking for artists as reflected in our data and in the work of people like Richard Florida and John Holden needs to be contextualized by the fact that 44% of our artist respondents felt they lacked adequate opportunities for networking or collaboration with other artists or arts organizations and 60% felt the lack of adequate collaboration or networking opportunities with individuals, organizations or businesses outside the arts.

## Where are gaps and/or weaknesses in the system?



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work  
Photo: Courtesy of Guorong Feng

- 44% of artist respondents felt they lacked adequate opportunities for networking or collaboration *with other artists or arts organizations*,

and

- 60% felt the lack of adequate collaboration or networking opportunities with individuals, organizations or businesses *outside the arts*

If there are cities anxious to foster a stronger creative economy and a more sustainable creative ecology, then these artists may be providing more broadly applicable practical and helpful suggestions many of which are neither expensive nor especially difficult to address.

## Where are gaps and/or weaknesses in the system?

- “I see the internet as a great way to still find opportunities, but I have made the greatest leap forwards with my career when I have been able to collaborate and be inspired by local people doing the same thing as I am or that I aspire to do.”
- “There need to be more artist round tables or conferences, broken down by discipline, to network and gain knowledge. Saskatchewan feels very isolated from these types of resources.”
- “There is a severe lack of opportunities for emerging and mid career artists and makers to get together in collaborative settings. The transfer of knowledge, ideas and learning is immense in those settings. Increased opportunities for collaboration and learning may also encourage young artists to see potential for careers in the arts.”

- SPAR artist respondents

In conclusion, I hope this presentation has given you some sense of the value to be gained from grassroots consultations with artists and the public within the context of cross-disciplinary, systematic research. In Florida’s knowledge-based creative economy, decision-making that is not firmly grounded on reliable place-based and arts-specific evidence vs anecdotes, impressions or even generalized secondary data sets is unlikely to contribute effectively to an innovative and creative climate. Commissioned reports that are essentially reviews or compilations of existing secondary data that may

or may not be timely, comparable or locally relevant may be quick and relatively inexpensive to produce, but they can be too easily dismissed as lobbying documents or lacking in scientifically grounded data. The kind of research process we are undertaking is indeed challenging, expensive and time consuming, but Florida's emphasis on networking and collaboration applies as much in making this kind of research feasible at a city level as it does in the realization of creative and innovative ideas.

I would offer three recommendations to anyone interested in pursuing this kind of research within a creative city ecosystem:

1. Seek out research partners and partnerships--including connections with university researchers from a range of disciplines who have expertise and interest in community-based research. They have access to funding sources and expertise that can make primary research feasible. SPAR is in fact currently looking for partners elsewhere in Canada who are interested in a broader research program and a grant application to do it.
2. Set your sights on primary, place-based, arts-specific data derived from community-based research in which you have a full partnership role from research design to analysis and dissemination of research results. University researchers may offer excellent knowledge and expertise, but practitioners on the front lines of programming and policy-making know where the most serious gaps in knowledge are, what questions need to be asked most urgently, who needs to be asked, and what the most stunning discoveries are in the data. They also have the best sense of how the research findings can and will be used on the front lines and how they can best be presented to the folks who will use them.
3. Take an ecological vs exclusively economic focus. Economic indicators are just one way of measuring a creative ecology. Listen to what arts and cultural organizations and businesses have to say. Listen to professional, emerging and amateur artists. Listen to other individuals encompassed within Florida's ever expanding creative class. And listen to the general public whose engagement is essential to the creative ecology. Finding the points of socially and culturally as well as economically productive exchange between these groups--along with the gaps or disconnections in the ecological networks--should help to identify how a city itself can most effectively be positioned within and contribute to the creative ecology.

## Recommendations for Research Within Creative City Ecosystems

1. Seek out research partners and partnerships
  - SPAR welcomes partners for upcoming research projects.
2. Set your sights on primary, place-based, arts-specific data derived from community-based research
  - Take a full partnership role
3. Take an ecological vs exclusively economic focus.
  - Creative Ecosystem = Social and Cultural as well as Economic Factors

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