

Let the Sparks Fly!

Music represents more than money to our economy. It's a foundation.

Together, Paul Cummings and Walter Martella drive two of the forces responsible for Powell River's cultural capital: Kathaumixw and the Academy of Music.

How is sustainability (social, environmental, economic) a factor in arts/culture initiatives?

Paul • Good ideas spin off in a multitude of ways. Take the Choir of the World Totem Pole. We built on Kathaumixw's First Nations roots. Here is sustainability in action – a downed cedar log carved into a work of art, culturally blessed, paraded and showcased. The Totem created greater interest in Kathaumixw and promoted participation and tourism because choirs wanted to win it. Now, eighteen people will take the totem to Slovenia, including carver Craig Galligos, Mayor Formosa, Chief Williams, filmmaker Claudia Medina and others. It will become a national story there that will pay us dividends. It is the gift that just keeps on giving!

What role does arts/culture play in developing a strong economy?

Walter • Our biggest impact is building a good community. We don't think much about the money part. I am fortunate to be the steward of this school and I do it for the love of it, to contribute to making a good community. Wealth is in the success of the community, in better lives and vibrant lifestyle.

Paul • Yes, economics is secondary. We employ people; there is capital in concerts and other events, but it is about a healthy community with good quality of life. However, these questions make me realize the importance and value of arts/culture in contributing to the economy!

What needs to be in place for arts/cultural initiatives to be economically viable?

Paul • We already have great infrastructure – the Evergreen Theatre, the band shell at Willingdon, Max Cameron Theatre, the Academy; excellent facilities for a small community. We have strong leaders with vision and the ability to attract people who share the vision. We think about who we can work with for mutual benefit. It is an unexpected evolution – a surprise that various unknown people can become partners to bring visions to life. This community is great about



THE MUSIC MEN: Walter Martella, academy music director, and Paul Cummings, academy director and Kathaumixw artistic director, say Powell River's character is key to the vibrancy of culture here. But is bigger necessarily better?

GROUNDSWELL PLANNING

What: Meeting to help design October's Groundswell conference.

When: June 4, 10 am

Where: VIU

making connections.

Walter • People here want to make a great community and great life, and the importance of arts and culture is understood. Maybe it's 'in the air' here! We have vibrant cultures; traditions remain and everyone sees the value in those traditions.

What are your ideas to cultivate a thriving region?

Walter • It already is! It's pretty vibrant along Marine Avenue...there is a whole new scene down there.

Paul • Some people would like to see the region developed. Others like that we are relatively undiscovered, quaint, with reasonable living expenses. Where do I sit? As an educator, I'd like to see more young families and more job opportunities as kids grow up. That kind of development is good. However, I do love

that we have exactly what we have. Attracting more people or business to the region means going with strengths – our natural beauty, First Nations culture, the great infrastructure we have, people who care and get involved. Use those strengths...

What makes Powell River unique?

Paul • We're unique because we are so darn isolated! There is transience in other places...easy to live in one place and work in another. I teach kids whose parents and grandparents went to school here. We have core families and traditions carry on from generation to generation.

Walter • I think lots of people choose Powell River because of the arts and culture; it's accessible and affordable in a way that isn't available in other places. Would the Academy be successful someplace else? North Vancouver or Gibsons? I don't think so – there is not the same regard for arts and culture.

Paul • I'm 100% convinced that Kathaumixw would not exist in any other town.

Walter • Kathaumixw has been branded by Powell River...it only happens here.



GROUNDSWELL:

inspiring creativity, ideas, and relationships
that advance the wellbeing of our community



Join the Groundswell community audio walk project.
Contact megandulcie@shaw.ca for more information.

Powell River Dollars
now at First Credit Union.
Buy PR\$ and direct them to a non-profit group, or deposit/withdraw PR\$ from your account.