ARTS COUNCIL
WOOD BUFFALO

NEWS RELEASE:
RMWB approves $5 million grant request for the development of Arts Inc

For Immediate Release

Fort McMurray, AB, June 29, 2022 – On June 28, 2022, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) Council approved Arts Council Wood Buffalo's (ACWB) proposal of $5 million as part of the Community Capital Grant to aid in the development of the Arts Inc project.

Arts Inc, to be located in the former Landmark Cinema building in downtown, will provide a 'landing place' for residents and visitors of the region to engage with the arts. The project meets the expressed need for purpose-built creative maker spaces, with proper ventilation, lighting, accessibility, and fills a gap in arts infrastructure within the region.

“Arts Council Wood Buffalo is very grateful to the Municipal Administration for recommending funding and to the Mayor and Council for voting in favour of the Arts Inc Project. Their support will enable us to access grants for this initiative from Provincial and Federal funders and kickstart the revitalization of a building with a long history in the community,” said Executive Director Liana Wheeldon.

This project seeks to transform the former Landmark Cinema building into a creative space for the arts and community-at-large. There are significant cost-savings in reclaiming an existing structure rather than building new. The location of Arts Inc will be an integral part of the municipality's intended Arts and Culture District connecting with Kiyam Park, the Waterfront, the Total Trail, MacDonald Island Park, and the Métis Cultural Centre.

Arts Inc is a perfect complement to the Métis Cultural Centre, Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts and Keyano Theatre as it is the place where artists will create the work that is presented in these facilities. McMurray Métis and ACWB have met several times to share progress with each other on projects to ensure that there is no duplication of services in the facilities.

When seeking to revitalize and diversify the local economy, investing in the arts is a proven strategy. Upon the review of other industry-based communities faced with economic downturn, natural disasters, and diminishing populations, there is solid data demonstrating that the arts make a difference in the viability, sustainability, and growth of cities. For example, skilled workers are four times more likely to look at a community’s arts and culture scene before considering a move to the given new community.

Modeled on other successful arts-based social enterprises, Arts Inc will enable ACWB to become self-sustaining through providing revenue streams from leased parking agreements, daily paid parking, office space leasing, and venue use rentals. It will allow ACWB to increase its sustainability and reduce its dependence on the municipality and other year-over-year funders.

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Activities such as community galleries, artisan markets, black box theaters, and cultural activity spaces create an exciting destination that will encourage other businesses to populate the downtown core. Arts Inc will be the centerpiece of downtown's revitalization and be the anchor for future rural incubators. Arts Inc will reflect the vibrant and diverse community while offering opportunities for engagement with arts and culture.

Arts and culture are the lifeblood of a society from telling the stories of the region to entertaining and providing education. Arts and culture reflect the community and provide respite that contributes to the wellbeing of residents. Providing a dedicated, purpose-built arts incubator will foster the creative economy, offer opportunity for creatives of all ages in our region to find their purpose, and connect the community-at-large to arts and culture. Arts Inc will offer a view into the creative process, workshops to participate in, and a place to engage with multiple arts disciplines. It will provide an accessible, affordable and secure space for new to emerging to professional creatives to be supported in their practice.

"The Board and Staff are excited to start this next period of growth for Arts Council as we create this social enterprise to serve the community, contributing to a remarkable quality of life, and providing sustainability for our organization's future," said Wheeldon.

Learn more about the project, next steps, community benefits, FAQs, and more at artscouncilwb.ca/arts-inc. Follow ACWB on social media (@artscouncilwb) to stay up to date about the arts in Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo.

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ACWB is a non-profit society and charitable organization that supports the growth and success of the arts in Wood Buffalo. ACWB was established to raise the profile of the arts in our region and to provide support to all facets of the arts community.

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