

**CULTURE DAYS WEB STRATEGY
PRELIMINARY DRAFT**

LAST UPDATE : April 20, 2009

BACKGROUND

CULTURE DAYS PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Culture Days is a pan-Canadian movement and annual event that aims to raise awareness among citizens, from each Province and Territory, about the importance of arts and culture in their community's social and economic development.

Initiated and supported by Canada's largest cultural organizations through the Canadian Arts Summit, and endorsed and supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Culture pour tous in Québec, the Alberta Government and the Ontario Arts Council, Culture Days is gaining momentum with enthusiastic interest and commitment building amongst leaders and provinces across the country.

CULTURE DAYS OBJECTIVES

- To stimulate and strengthen a sense of ownership of arts and culture by citizens in their local communities
- To foster support and appreciation of the artistic and cultural life that is lived, created and expressed in small and big cities alike
- To unite artists, cultural workers and organizations, municipalities and private companies from each of the Provinces and Territories in a vast pan-Canadian cultural democratization movement
- To plan and coordinate a broad public relations campaign in partnership with national and local media

GOALS

- To be an inclusive initiative driven by the voluntary involvement of citizens and cultural workers, professional and amateur organizations, municipalities and businesses—from across every Province and Territory—all who have been invited to develop and produce accessible, free activities specifically for this event.
- To affirm that each citizen is the true guardian of the cultural life of his or her community.
- To foster and promote interaction between cultural players and citizens in a simple and convivial setting.

METHOD

Culture Days will manifest itself in collaboration with provincial host organizations, volunteer committees in each province as well as with provincial public and private sector funders and media to further develop and leverage provincial events and activities. As such Culture Days will:

- Take the shape of interactive demonstrations, hands-on workshops, guided tours, and other activities focusing on the creative process and the inside workings of the arts and cultural world.

- Be promoted and supported by a broad public relations, media campaign and online portal.
- Invite each Province and Territory to join the project and support its development, financing and organization in its region or to further develop existing initiatives which respond to Culture Days' objectives.

MOVING AHEAD – DEVELOPMENT TO DATE

In addition to the highly successful *les Journées de la Culture* in Québec of which the project was initially inspired and whose producing organization Culture pour tous is a founding partner, both Ontario and Alberta launched events that respond to Culture Days objectives in 2008 entitled *spOtlight* and *Alberta Arts Days* respectively. The producers of *spOtlight* and *Alberta Arts Days*, the Ontario Arts Council and the Alberta Government's Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit Culture Days (respectively) have both endorsed and expressed support of the Culture Days initiative.

Leadership groups are already mobilizing in B.C. and Manitoba through Provincial Task Forces (volunteer committees), which will work closely with local leadership and public funders to initiate or further develop existing initiatives that would dovetail with Culture Days. An Ontario Task Force was launched in March to work with local leaders across that province and the Ontario Arts Council to further develop *spOtlight*, and an Alberta Task Force is being composed to assist in the further development of *Alberta Arts Days*.

Tri-level working groups are preparing pilot projects that would respond to Culture Days objectives in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, bringing the total number of provinces working on local events and activities, all at varying stages of development, to seven.

Immediate action items for Culture Days include the development of a brand and identity for Culture Days and the mobilization of a Web strategy. As a nationally-coordinated initiative that aims to support and leverage existing provincially-driven events, and to encourage the development of additional new ones, Culture Days' branding will be designed to co-exist with current and future provincial initiatives. *Les Journées de la Culture*, *Alberta Arts Days* and *spOtlight*, for example, will all retain their provincial identities, while using the Culture Days brand to promote connection and value from coast to coast. Details on how Culture Days will benefit provincial partners are being refined as more input is brought in.

WEB STRATEGY

VISION

To support the Culture Days objectives, the website will be a central online hub for all stakeholders, including partners, producers, and the public to connect and participate at different levels in different ways. The website will incorporate **a rich array of media** formats and tools into an integrated platform which will leverage and **showcase provincial initiatives** from coast-to-coast, promote **access to resources** for stakeholders, **highlight** the contributions of **supporters and participants**, and create a **community-driven space online** for the vast public to **experience first-hand** the full breadth and scope of this project in a **peer-to-peer, person-to-person framework**. The website will not only inform but transform its users, by embodying the Culture Days vision of enhancing complementary provincial initiatives based on principles of inclusiveness, accessibility, and cultural democratization.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

This document outlines the overall vision for a national web strategy. Culture Days will consult with each provincial producer (i.e. the producers of *les Journées de la culture*, *spOtligh*, and *Alberta Arts Days*) to address how the web strategy will best respond to their particular regional needs and priorities. The Culture Days website is expected to be a lever for provincial initiatives – a mechanism for enhancing all parallel projects.

For Alberta, as an example, the Culture Days web strategy clearly addresses the four keystones of the Spirit of Alberta Cultural Policy by:

- increasing and diversifying points and levels of **access** for Albertans to a wide range of cultural activities – in-person, on the Internet, and through mobile devices
- providing communities with the **capacity** (tools, technology, resources, and mechanisms) to support culture in a range of ways
- showcasing provincial **excellence** in arts and culture – providing opportunities for Alberta artists, creators, and cultural leadership to shine and to be featured
- partnering with key players within the **cultural industries** to explore innovative collaborations, and promote Albertan expertise and talent (e.g. in digital media)

The proposed Culture Days web portal will apply new technology to strengthen the collective ability to share and experience culture. The Culture Days web strategy represents a significant new opportunity for leadership in multi-level, cross-sectoral partnerships in support of arts and culture in every province.

WORKING PROCESS

A Working Group is being established with contacts from across the country to help refine the Culture Days Web Strategy. The Working Group members will include new media experts, provincial producers, cultural professionals with experience creating online engagement projects, and others.

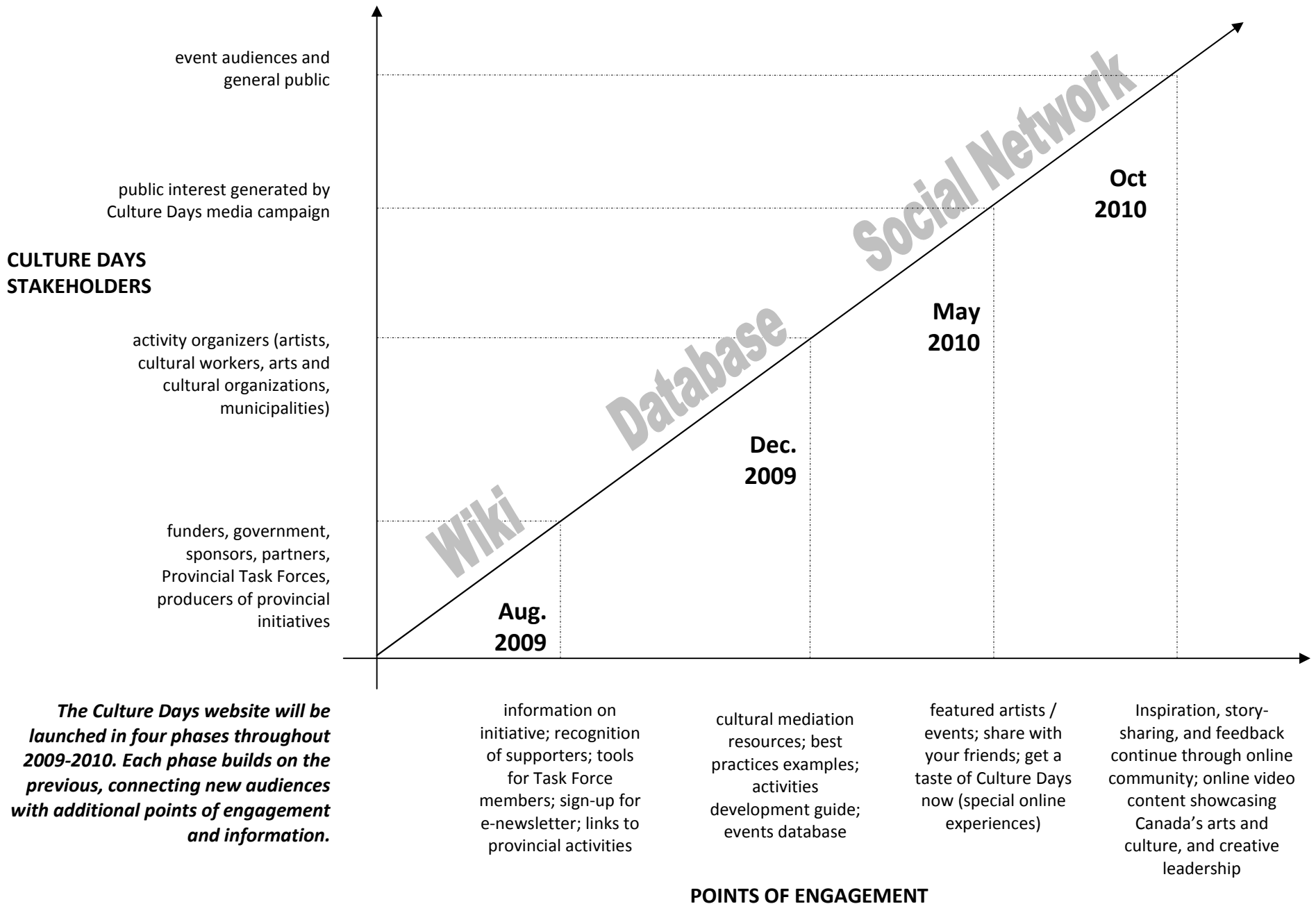
SUMMARY OF WEB COMPONENTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The Web Strategy Working Group will help refine the final core components for the Culture Days Web Strategy which would be implemented as first priorities. Other components may be considered as special projects, pending demand, additional funding and sponsors. Some possible components to consider for the Web Strategy:

1. A sophisticated **database** that will bring together existing information from the producers of provincial initiatives (i.e. calendar of events), to allow the public to conduct searches for events in their area, or to generate a schedule for a day, a weekend, or a week. Clicking for event details will link users to information on the websites of the provincial events producers. Depending on the level of interest, the database could further enhance provincial partnerships through additional features such as:
 - a. A portable mini-interface (i.e. banner-style search box) that can be easily embedded on the homepage of the provincial events producers
 - b. A mobile interface created for cellphone, BlackBerry and iPhone users to access events information from their mobile devices
2. An **e-newsletter deployment system** which will collect and manage contacts through the website, and deploy e-newsletters to the registered contacts on a regular basis. The newsletters would range from internal communiqués to update partners, Task Forces and producers on the advancement of initiatives in different areas, to general promotional messages designed to highlight provincial events to the general public. Depending on the needs articulated by the provincial partners, the contacts may be segmented by location to allow Culture Days newsletters to be tailored to regional interests (i.e. highlight Alberta Arts Days to Alberta contacts).
3. A **Wiki** that will allow partners, cultural workers and cultural organizations to easily share and aggregate their experiences, knowledge and questions with each other on topics such as cultural mediation, best practices, different regional working models, anecdotal stories, useful tips and tools. The Wiki will help promote and leverage existing expertise and experience from different groups, including the producers of *les Journées de la culture*, *Alberta Arts Days*, and *spOtlight*, for the benefit of all organizers and participants. (A good example of a resource built on Wiki technology is the infamous user-generated Wikipedia.)
4. A **social network** that will allow the public to interact with each other as well as with cultural workers and cultural organizations in a peer-to-peer format. A variety of functions would be possible, including recommending events, sharing photos and videos, creating and contributing to discussions on arts and culture, using mobile devices to join the conversation while away from the computer. (Facebook and MySpace are two well-known examples of social networks.)

5. **Online programming** – Inspiring talks on process, behind-the-scenes glimpses, artist demonstrations, guided tours, and more... Canada’s creative visionaries and cultural leaders reveal their work, their methods, their strategies, and their ideas. There is great demand for non-fiction video content. (Picture it as TED.com but with exclusively Canadian stories. If videos are produced and submitted by arts and cultural organizations, they could choose between uploading their video to YouTube which would then be linked to embed the video on the Culture Days site, or they could upload directly to the site which would allow them to present higher-quality video.)
6. **Video mash-up maker** – A simple but powerful video editor built right into the website interface to allow stakeholders to create videos out of a mix of photos, video and text. The mash-up maker and video library (of user-generated mash-ups) would work in tandem with a social network platform to enable sharing and social discourse.
7. **Online cultural experience** - A new media or integrated arts artist is invited to create a project that the public experiences and participates in, through the Culture Days website– a transformative online engagement that amplifies and underscores the Culture Days vision.

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE & STRATEGY FOR CULTURE DAYS WEBSITE



The Culture Days website will be launched in four phases throughout 2009-2010. Each phase builds on the previous, connecting new audiences with additional points of engagement and information.

WEB STRATEGY BREAKDOWN + TIMELINE

Working with provincial partners to develop functionalities that correspond to their needs, the Culture Days website will be launched in four phases throughout 2009-2010. Each phase will build on the previous, connecting new stakeholders with additional points of engagement and information.

A content management system will permit content changes to happen “in-house” at any time without going through the website developer. Website analytics will be used throughout every phase of the website to monitor activity and gauge public interest, awareness and engagement with Culture Days.

PHASE 1 : Summer 2009

Presents information on the Culture Days Initiative as a growing pan-Canadian movement developing in provinces across the country. Registers website users to generate a segmented Culture Days contact list. Provides preliminary tools and resources for provincial partners.

Key development components to include:

- Translation of brand elements into a website design
- Design of a web architecture that can support the subsequent, anticipated phases of development
- Portal to all provincial initiatives (e.g. les Journées de la culture, Alberta Arts Days, spOtligh, others) and upcoming 2009 events
- Recognition of funders, Task Force members, host organizations (i.e. producers of provincial initiatives), participating artists and organizers etc.
- Preliminary tools and resources for provincial partners – possibilities include: articles on cultural mediation, documentation of best practices, explanation of different working models geared towards similar ends, project management tools and tips for Task Forces. (Beginning of a fluid, self-sustained resource powered by Wiki technology, with content contributed by Culture Days and the network members themselves)
- Sign-up for e-updates on news for Culture Days partners (i.e. organizers and producers of provincial initiatives, Task Forces, funders etc), potential participants of provincial initiatives (i.e. cultural workers and organizations that could submit activities for inclusion in provincial initiatives), and the public – each audience segment would a different newsletter with content appropriate to their role as a stakeholder.
- Looking ahead – soon to come on the website (point to cultural mediation resources and social media components that will be integrated into the online experience)

PHASE 2 : December 2010

Website will continue to evolve as a resource portal to aid and inspire partners (provincial networks, host organizations and other stakeholders) and participants (artists and arts organizations). Content will enhance, not duplicate, the work of provincial initiatives. Key development components to include:

- Activities Development Guide (finalize by October 2009)
- Promoting deadlines for submissions to provincial initiatives and criteria for inclusion
- The Culture Days Wiki: online access to cultural mediation resources, examples and best practices from across the country; a knowledge-sharing, collaborative workspace or “thinkspace”

PHASE 3 : May – August 2010 (series of roll-out dates)

Launch of first edition of Canada-wide media and public relations campaign – in concert with provincial publicity and promotion efforts. The Culture Days campaign will drive the public to the website. The site will enhance the work of provincial partners by providing a searchable online database of events that is integrated and equipped with an array of social media tools, while continuing to act as a portal or gateway to the sites and resources of the provincial partners. The Culture Days website will be a central online hub for all stakeholders, including partners, participants, and the public to connect and participate at different levels in different ways.

- Featured artists, featured events presented in the form of photos, videos, audio, text, with invitation to comment and discuss etc. (i.e. sort of like a blend of MySpace music sharing, YouTube video sharing, and news articles with link to “email this to a friend”)
- Search event listings in your area, generate a schedule for the day(s)
- Share individual events or your day’s schedule with your friends
- Add to my calendar (e.g. Google Calendar, iCalendar, Facebook) and let others know you plan to attend (e.g. Twitter, MSN)
- Bookmark it in your del.icio.us account, aggregate it in your RSS feeds, Digg it etc.
- Social community network – create our own network (e.g. Ning, Elgg) as well as present an integrated presence within existing communities (i.e. Facebook, MySpace etc.)
- Creative contests to create buzz, generate interest, foster participation
- Mobile access– view featured content, check activities schedule, and upload video, photos, stories via mobile interface using cellphones, iPhones, Blackberries etc.

PHASE 4 : October 2010

Following any Culture Days events, artists and audiences will be encouraged to continue to share stories and talk about their experiences. The Culture Days online social network will showcase the diverse activities across Canada and encourages peer-to-peer dialogue between artists, arts organizations, and audiences. **The online social network will create virtual space for all initiatives in every region to become animated by all stakeholders, especially the arts and cultural participants, and the public so that this annual community-driven celebration of arts and culture across Canada continues online 365 days per year.**

- Share your Flickr and Facebook photos – everyone can participate: audience members, artists, cultural workers, arts and culture organizations etc.
- Share your videos – everyone can participate: audience members, artists, cultural workers, arts and culture organizations etc.
- In particular, artists, cultural workers, arts and culture organizations will be invited to share online videos capturing artists, creators, creative visionaries, and cultural leaders in inspiring talks on process, behind-the-scenes glimpses, artist demonstrations, guided tours, and more...
- Links to peripheral activities and services (e.g. storyboard and print your photo albums using Blurb, a book-printing-on-demand service, to create your own unique coffee table book)
- Government offices for tourism and public diplomacy can link to the site – showcasing enthusiastic, spirited Canada-wide arts and cultural happenings, and personal creative expressions by individual members of the public
- Looking forward - timeline for next year

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Additional projects not part of the core 2009 – 2010 web strategy and budget, but would greatly enhance Culture Days, after the core site is functional, and the necessary resources are put in place.

Imagine...

INTEGRATED ART PROJECT – Invite an artist with a sophisticated and compelling practice in new media or integrated arts to create a cultural experience online. The overarching goal of creating this artist-driven project will be to provide a transformative cultural experience that amplifies and underscores the Culture Days community-oriented vision and values of sharing, participating, creativity and creation, individual expression, exchange, and dialogue.

VIDEO MASH-UP MAKER – A simple but powerful video editor built right into the website interface to allow stakeholders to create videos out of a mix of photos, video and text. Users will be encouraged to share, explore, experiment, discover, exchange and discuss arts and culture in Canada in as many ways as they can imagine. Some ways to add incentive for users to participate include involving prominent creative leaders, offering cultural prizes, and designing creative contests which will spur excitement and participation – which will in turn generate more interest, and more user-generated content.