



NEVADA COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

2020 ANNUAL REPORT





WHO WE ARE

Nevada County Arts Council, by resolution of Nevada County Board of Supervisors, is State-Local Partner with California Arts Council. We facilitate collaborative efforts that promote and sustain the visual, literary, and performing arts of Nevada County in order to advance the cultural, social, and economic life of our community.

THE BUSINESS OF ART

Less than a year before the COVID-19 public health crisis, Nevada County Arts Council had published the results of its year-long Arts & Economic Prosperity Study, showing that our cultural sector in Nevada County generated—pre-pandemic—\$46.9 million in total economic activity in annual spending, supported 869 full-time equivalent jobs, generated \$20.9 million in household income to local residents, and delivered \$5.1 million in local and state government revenue. Clearly, the arts mean business!

We believe that investing in our creative sector is a win-win. In February, 2020, we hosted The Business of Art, an illuminating plenary and day-long professional development symposium for our creative community, led by over thirty thought leaders and influencers from the field. Two hundred creatives, cultural workers and arts leaders engaged in discussions around pressing current cultural, artistic and professional issues, and in sessions exploring the top trends and challenges in our field.

We believe that the creative sector in Nevada County is a living, breathing industry, and that a better-prepared workforce will help us re-group and recover faster with as we move beyond COVID into a phase of revitalization.

ON THE COVER

Artist Amanda Ganong
Art in Storefronts
Photos: Kial James



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Acting Up

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Yuba Lit

Rachel Howard

Nevada County Poet Laureate

Chris Olander

Poetry Out Loud

Conrad Cecil
Kim Ewing

Dream A Difference

Conrad Cecil
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EXECUTIVE LETTER

In late February, just three weeks before our Governor issued a shelter-in-place order for the whole of California, Nevada County Arts Council hosted The Business of Art. Little did we know, as we welcomed close to 200 creatives for a day of professional development, that this would be the last time for at least a year we would spend in one another's company in such numbers.

By mid-April, on completion of our COVID-19 Early Impact Study, arts organizations in Nevada County estimated total losses of up to \$10 million. We said at the time that it was too early to properly estimate the devastating losses to our industry, and that only later surveying would lend a more complete picture. We now know this to be true.

Advocating that arts should be eligible to apply to the Nevada County Relief Fund, we then created a fund of our own to support local professional artists and launched an online festival to support this effort called WHAT A RELIEF!

Simultaneously, we opted into a state program to re-grant CARES Act funding to organizations and groups that support communities of color through cultural programming. We called our initiative—which disbursed these funds to six organizations—Nevada County CARES for the Arts.

With our California Cultural Districts in mind, we inaugurated Art in Storefronts, installing the work of eleven artists in downtown vacant storefronts, sharing a message of hope and resilience, industry and innovation. Then, in December, we launched our Shopping with Artists initiative, providing a fabulous, local, online shopping experience while supporting local professional artists as the pandemic wore on.

All this activity was in addition to our regular programming, including the transformation of many of our arts education programs into the virtual sphere. We were particularly proud to partner with Nevada County Office of Education to complete the first ever Strategic Plan for Arts Education, representing a beacon of hope for all students from kindergarten through high school.

This year, we continued our work with Nevada County's Nisenan Tribe through Nisenanim Ni, or I AM NISENAN. As partners with Nevada City Film Festival we are honored to be working in tandem with the keepers of this place we call home.

As all of us consider our future and our mountain homelands, Nevada County Arts Council is looking to our forests for the solution to the growing risk of catastrophic fire in California. Despite steep competition for funding we remain on track to mount FOREST= FIRE during 2021.

Perhaps our most important work during 2020, though, has been our work towards racial and cultural equity. With ever greater focus, we see this work as one of the most important journeys of our generation. Like you, we wish Nevada County to be known as a place where all people feel at home, and where a healthy arts ecosystem supports opportunities for every type of organization and artist. We believe that cultural diversity, access and equity—in all forms—are key to a healthy population, and we look forward to (really) seeing you in 2021!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eliza Tudor'.

Eliza Tudor
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Blinder'.

Jon Blinder
Board President



NEVADA COUNTY CARES

During 2020 we re-granted close to \$30,000 in CARES Act funding via the California Arts Council, in support of organizations and collectives whose work supports communities of color hard hit by the COVID-19 public health crisis. With Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, these funds were leveraged through its support of Eastern Nevada County arts organizations. Congratulations to our awardees: California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP), Color Me Human, Community Asian Theatre of the Sierra (CATS), Trails & Vistas, Neighborhood Center of the Arts, and Grass Valley Taiko.

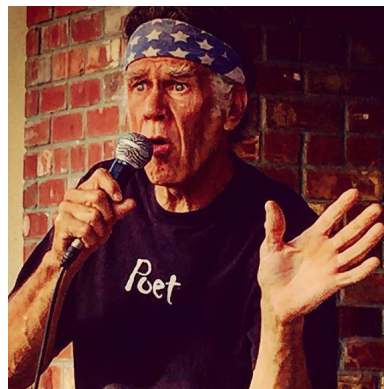
SHOPPING WITH ARTISTS

In partnership with both our California Cultural Districts, Nevada County Arts Council and its partners created Shopping with Artists as a fabulous online shopping experience supporting almost one hundred local professional artists in advance of a holiday season like none other. This creative placemaking initiative sees us continuing into the foreseeable future in support of artists in all disciplines, while we navigate a pandemic with devastating impacts on our local creative economy.

ARTIST RELIEF FUND

In response to the devastating loss of livelihoods as a result of COVID Nevada County Arts Council formed a coalition of local arts organizations to create an emergency initiative to support artists within Nevada County. The Nevada County Artist Relief Fund was established to provide micro relief grants to artists, and—to help jumpstart donations and raise awareness for the fund—we presented in partnership with Nevada City Film Festival an online festival featuring over 30 performances by musicians, artists, actors, and more. Our festival was called WHAT A RELIEF!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



ART IN STOREFRONTS

Grass Valley-Nevada City Cultural District, led by Nevada County Arts Council and its partners, once again stepped up during 2020, supported by Nevada County Economic Resource Council and the County of Nevada. Art in Storefronts comprised eleven fantastic installations in otherwise vacant storefronts, including those by two much loved local organizations: California Heritage Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP) and Community Asian Theatre of the Sierra (CATS). Together, our artist teams and businesses highlighted local innovation, and provided visibility for our hard-hit downtown spaces and property owners, while celebrating the work of artists.

NEVADA COUNTY POET LAUREATE

Chris Olander spent 2020 saving the world through fresh new poems about nature, the climate and social justice. Chris Olander's poem, Monarch, was sent to our Nevada County Board of Supervisors, to Governor Gavin Newsom, to local, state and national legislators, our State Parks, our Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service and an array of other national environmental groups. He also circulated his poem, To Questers, which celebrates the lives of immigrants starting out in the United States, far and wide. Olander will publish his next full collection of poems in time to read from it at our 5th Annual Sierra Poetry Festival on April 10 and 11, 2021.

SIERRA POETRY FESTIVAL

Our 2020 festival, at the outset of the COVID-19 public health crisis, transformed itself into an online event, winning hearts and minds globally, and welcoming close to a thousand registrants and another 10,000 via our live-stream. The New York Times singled us out as one of only three festivals to be presented during National Poetry Month, and we offered the festival free of charge as a way of bringing hope during dark times. We'll be online again on April 10 and 11, 2021 to present poets, critics and visionaries for readings, slams, workshops, discussion and youth voices, kick-starting National Poetry Month with the theme of Re-mem-bering.



NISENANIM NI

Our unique partnership with the Nisenan Tribe and Nevada City Film Festival to document the recovery of the Nisenan's all but lost language through film continued on during 2020, despite severe disruptions. Tribal members learned important filmmaking skills, while controlling the screenplay's voice and vision and participating in all aspects of a unique process. From this came Nisem K'auwak'—or WE ARE HERE—a series of videos that look at the Nisenan of the past and the Nisenan in our present. As we re-emerge into the public sphere, post-pandemic, we look forward to sharing these films in person with you in our favorite community spaces.

During 2020, Nevada County Arts Council welcomed Fieldmouse Press to its *Arts Incubator Program*. Arts Incubator supports cultural innovation in Nevada County, providing a capacity-building hub for cultural initiatives or emerging arts collaboratives.

Meet some of our fiscally sponsored projects:



FOREST ⇌ FIRE

Exciting progress was made during 2020 to raise much needed matching funds towards this ambitious California Creative Communities project, FOREST ⇌ FIRE. FOREST ⇌ FIRE will culminate in fall and winter 2021 at Truckee Community Recreation Center and—alongside its creators, Llewellyn Studio, and multiple partners—will share the story of our forests that reaches back as far the last ice-age and right up to the present moment. FOREST ⇌ FIRE acknowledges Washoe lands and people and offers Californians an immersive experience combining arts, science, industry, and education to reveal what roles each of us can play in helping to save them.

ARTS INCUBATOR



FIELDMOUSE PRESS

Fieldmouse Press began its inaugural year with the publication of SOLRAD, an online literary magazine for comics, and quickly established the site as one of the leading voices advancing the comics arts. Since then, it has published a myriad of critical reviews and original comics, with an emphasis on diversity and promoting underrepresented voices. It has also provided a platform for working cartoonists to talk about their experiences with the publishing industry, small press comics publishers to talk about the unique challenges of publishing during a pandemic, and academics to discuss the role of NPOs in supporting the comics ecosystem.



TRUCKEE ARTS ALLIANCE

Through its monthly public meetings and representation on Truckee Cultural District's Advisory team, Truckee Arts Alliance continued to provide important advocacy and support for the establishment of key strategic areas of focus. An important vehicle for much needed communications and infrastructure to support Truckee Cultural District, Truckee Arts Alliance this year partnered with us and its neighboring California Cultural District—Grass Valley-Nevada City Cultural District—on multiple projects, including Shopping with Artists, Nevada County Artist Relief Fund and Nevada County CARES for the Arts.



YUBA LIT

Like so many of our favorite community programs, this important reading series was severely impacted during COVID-19. However, Yuba Lit's founder and producer Rachel Howard remained active in presenting safely and appropriately when possible. Our favorite event was a reading with renowned writer Zara Houshmand, whose translations of Rumi, the 13th Century Sufi poet, provide a counterpoint to popular American translations which have served to erase his cultural roots. Yuba Lit draws upon the wealth of serious writers who live here, and on new perspectives and influences from across California, while a strict code of access ensures a no one turned away for lack of funds policy.

During 2020 our approach towards cultural equity leadership became deeper and more explicit. As State-Local Partner with the California Arts Council, our role is to help build public will around shared values which are of real meaning to our own communities, and we felt that this was particularly important in relation to our racial equity work.

declines of other peoples, including African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander and Chinese populations, who experienced deep injustices. We appreciate Nevada County Historical Society's acknowledgment that "although Nevada County's population was comprised of many diverse groups in the past, knowledge about their institutions, buildings,



A JOURNEY TOWARD BELONGING: OUR APPROACH TO CULTURAL AND RACIAL EQUITY

At Nevada County Arts Council, we consider that racial equity is a process, a journey. We aim, over time, to encourage processes and practices that help individuals and groups build confidence and capacity in addressing some of the core competencies of leadership for equity locally.

Our focus on cultural equity recognizes that we are only slowly emerging from our demographic as a historically white community lacking in cultural diversity and access, so that acknowledging our oldest peoples—the Nisenan and the Washoe—has been our first priority in recent years.

We also recognize that our rich Gold Rush heritage saw the rise and



social movements and individual stories have been lost, or only partially remembered.”*

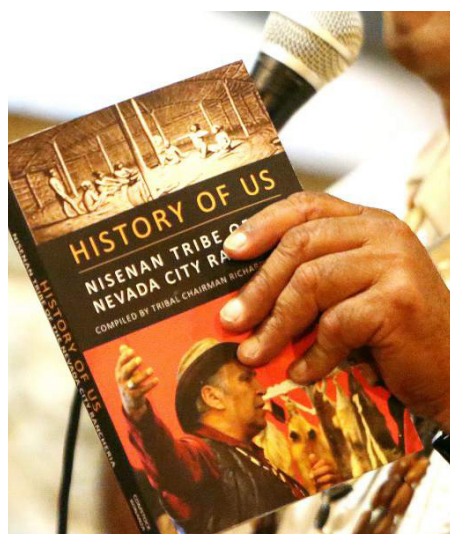
Looking ahead, we see recognition of these histories as essential in bringing our communities together and encouraging mutual respect for each other's ways of life. Equally, we see access to the arts and creativity as a universal right, through which those who have been underrepresented due to race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic and ability status, geography, citizenship status, or religion, can experience a sense of real belonging.

This sense of “belonging” gives credence to inclusion as being pivotal to the development of arts policy: the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; the space and time for all voices to be heard in the manner most natural and accessible to our communities; and the fair distribution of leadership, programmatic, financial and informational opportunities and resources.

Leading with race focuses energy and resources where needed, and neither excludes nor devalues the lives of other groups. All groups benefit by working together to make all lives sacred and protected. To these ends, we will continue to educate ourselves, hold ourselves accountable, and deepen community partnerships towards racial and cultural equity.

We invite you to join us on this journey. Find out more at nevadacountyarts.org/racial-equity.

* Legacies Lost and Found, Linda K. Jack, Nevada County Historical Society





ARTS EDUCATION

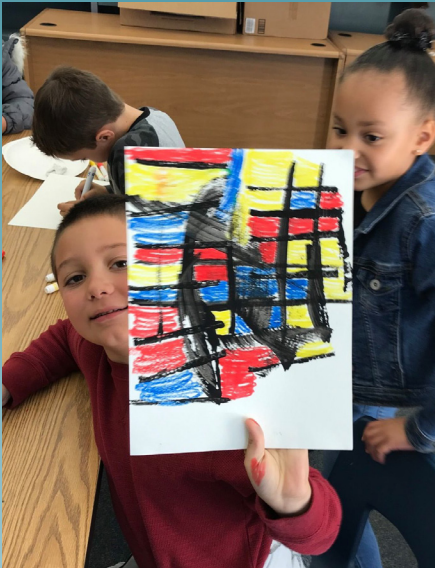
With COVID-19 public health crisis looming, and districts across Nevada County facing pressure to equitably offer support for students, Nevada County Arts Council was able to transform much of its classroom-bound education programs to suit online teaching for all.

ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS

Early in the year we partnered with Nevada County Superintendent of Schools and Nevada County Media to transform our Artist in Schools Program into an online series of art classes which we made available to all schoolteachers and students across the county. These fabulous videos are fun and freely available, combining Visual Arts Standards and academic curriculum in science, math, English and social studies.

YOUTH ARTS ACTION

In 2020, we began a new collaboration with Bright Futures for Youth, (formerly NEO Youth Center) to provide in person, socially distanced, afterschool classes for middle and high school students in guitar, photography, painting and drum lessons, graphic design and jewelry making.



POETRY OUT LOUD

During 2020 we partnered with six high schools on Poetry Out Loud, a national recitation contest that, for us, begins right here in Nevada County classrooms. Twenty student finalists from these six schools more finalists and greater participation from our schools than ever before. Despite the pandemic, Poetry Out Loud continues to offer students life-affirming public speaking skills, self-confidence, and important knowledge about literary history and contemporary life.

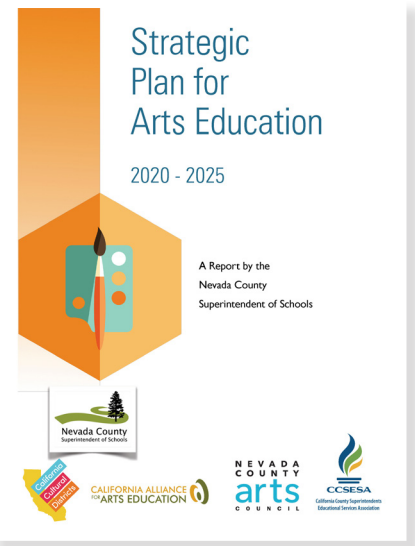


STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

During 2020, in partnership with Nevada County Superintendent of Schools and alongside multiple arts organizations, district administrators, board members, teachers and student representatives, we took pride in the publication of a five-year Strategic Plan for Arts Education.

Despite dire circumstances for schools, teachers and students, headway was made in beginning teacher training, supporting arts integration in our schools. This work has resulted in more funding for implementation planning during 2021 – a great reward for our arts advocacy!

More information about Arts Education at Nevada County Arts Council can be found at nevadacountyarts.org/overview.



STATE & NATIONAL PARTNERS

CREATE CA
 California Arts Council
 California Cultural Districts
 California Humanities
 California Lawyers for the Arts
 Californians for the Arts

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

City of Nevada City
 City of Grass Valley
 Community Asian Theatre of the Sierra
 Grass Valley School District
 Greater Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce
 KNCO Community Radio
 Nevada City Chamber of Commerce
 Nevada City Film Festival
 Nevada County Board of Supervisors
 Nevada County Economic Resource Council
 Nevada County Superintendent of Schools
 Penn Valley Union Elementary School District
 Sagehen Creek Field Station
 Sierra Watershed Education Projects
 Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation
 Tahoe Truckee Excellence in Education Foundation
 Town of Truckee
 Truckee Arts Alliance
 Truckee Chamber of Commerce
 Truckee Public Art Commission
 Truckee Tahoe Airport
 Welcome Home Vets
 Wild & Scenic Film Festival

OUR GRANTEES

California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project
 Color Me Human
 Community Asian Theatre of the Sierra
 Grass Valley Taiko
 Musica Sierra
 Neighborhood Center of the Arts
 Sierra Native American Culture Group
 Trails & Vistas
 Al Martinez
 Angele Carroll
 Brad Henry
 Chad Wood
 Chanthou Lam
 Christy Gurley
 Claire Lawrenson
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OUR SPECIAL THANKS

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Great thanks to all our members, donors, supporters, and volunteers. You help us move mountains!

BECOME A MEMBER

Members are the backbone of the Nevada County Arts Council. Join us! Nevada County Arts Council is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization and your contributions are tax-deductible by law. For your records, our Employment Identification Number (EIN) is 27-0314493.