



SID WILLIAMS THEATRE SOCIETY THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026



SID WILLIAMS
THEATRE
SOCIETY

SID WILLIAMS THEATRE SOCIETY OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES 2023-2026

This plan primarily focuses on short and medium term objectives for the SWT Society and the Sid Theatre for the following fiscal years and the concurrent programming seasons:

2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026.

Because of the tremendous impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the theatre industry and much lingering uncertainty, and because municipal cultural planning is actively in progress and includes the future of the theatre, the Sid Board and Management opted to work with this shorter planning time frame.

For the purposes of creating a vision for the farther future, and fundraising connected to this vision, some ideas outside of this time frame are explored.

WHO WE ARE AS AN ORGANIZATION

The Sid Williams Theatre is located on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation – the Sahtloot, Sasitla, Ieeksun and Puntledge peoples who have been care takers of this land since time immemorial – in the region also known today as the Comox Valley and downtown Courtenay, BC.

A registered charitable organization, the Sid Williams Theatre Society (SWTS) operates the 500-seat performing arts centre, balancing multiple roles as a performance facility for community groups, a professional venue for commercial events, and as an arts presenter offering a curated season of select performances.

What is now the Sid Williams Theatre, aka “The Sid”, was originally opened as the Bickle movie theatre by local entrepreneur E.W. Bickle in 1935. Prior to the Bickle, the Gaiety vaudeville theatre occupied the location. The venue was first renovated and reopened as a performance venue – through a “total community participation” effort led by the theatre’s namesake Sid Williams – in 1971 as a BC Centennial Project. The Sid was renovated again by the City of Courtenay in 1999-2000. The Sid Williams Theatre Society was formed at this time.

More information at:

<https://www.sidwilliamstheatre.com/about/>

<https://www.sidwilliamstheatre.com/about/history/>

<https://www.sidwilliamstheatre.com/about/publications/>





OUR VISION

An inclusive space to gather, inspire and cultivate live performance magic in the Comox Valley.

OUR MANDATE

We are dedicated to the stimulation and enhancement of artistic, cultural, and recreational activities in the Comox Valley and surrounding region through our operation of the Sid Williams Theatre.

OUR MISSION

To lead in the provision of professional theatre services for artistic and cultural groups and the wider community, and to offer a full range of theatrical experiences suitable for diverse audiences.

OUR VALUES

Safety: We ensure that the safety and security of our patrons, performers, staff, and volunteers are a primary concern in all aspects of our operations. Our workplace is inclusive and free from all harassment, discrimination, bullying or violence in any form.

Integrity and Respect: We are honest and transparent, accountable for our efforts, and maintain a consistently high ethical standard. We demonstrate respect for one another, our patrons, performers, clients, employees, volunteers and community.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: We ensure that the Society, our theatre facility, its services and programming are accessible and welcoming, physically, economically, and culturally to all area residents and guests.

Excellence and Artistic Freedom: We are motivated by the shared desire to provide quality facilities, services, and experiences for our patrons, performing artists, and our education and outreach participants. Our professional environment is one where all artists have the freedom to imagine and present creative works both experimental and traditional.

Cultural Life: We ensure that our facilities, services, and programming make a meaningful and positive contribution to the communities and residents of the Comox Valley and beyond. We value and nurture the contribution of our local and visiting artists, staff and management, volunteers and supporters.

PRIMARY GOALS 2023-2025

- 1 Become the Comox Valley's MAINSTAGE
- 2 Be a vibrant and sustainable organization,
- 3 Improve the capacity of our team to ensure seamless growth and transition,
- 4 Improve infrastructure to support being the premiere performance facility in the region.



OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING PRIMARY GOALS



GOAL - Become the Comox Valley's MAINSTAGE

.....

OBJECTIVE 1-A: Deliver on our cultural service and operating Commitments to the City of Courtenay and other key funders and stakeholders.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023:** Update content for City of Courtenay Management Agreements
- **2023-2024:** Request Management Agreements with other municipalities
- **2023-2024:** Work proactively with City Cultural Planning Consultants to clarify and strengthen the role of the theatre in the City/region
- **2023-2025:** Meet annually (or more) with City and Regional Council/s to report on the theatre's activities and needs (K'omoks First Nation, Town of Comox, Comox Valley Regional District, Village of Cumberland)
- **2023-2025:** Incorporate the priority of Indigenous Reconciliation in SWTS programming and services
- **2023-2025:** Incorporate the priorities of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in SWTS programming and services
- **2023 ongoing:** Strengthen mutually beneficial content in communication with existing funders

OBJECTIVE 1-B: Develop a One Stop Hub for CV Events.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Install digital marquee and feature downtown cultural partners
- **2024-2025:** Promote the capacity of the SWT Box Office to serve events anywhere in the region
- **2024-2026:** Work proactively with CV Arts to support this aspect of their mandate

OBJECTIVE 1-C: Deepen existing and develop new collaborations with other venues and cultural organizations.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2026:** Work proactively with existing partners and explore new opportunities for roundtables:
 - *City of Courtenay Cultural Partners Group (Courtenay Museum, CV Art Gallery, CV Arts) & K'omoks First Nation (KFN)*
 - *SWT Rental Clients (and potential clients)*
 - *Performing Arts Comox Valley*
 - *Comox Valley Multicultural Society, Immigrant Welcome Centre*
 - *Vancouver Island Venue Managers Group and other performing arts presenters and festivals*
 - *BC Touring Council and sector affiliates*
- **2024-2026:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with other venues:
 - *K'omoks Ceremonial Big House, Band Hall, I-Hos Gallery*
 - *Old Church Theatre*
 - *Cumberland Village Works*
 - *Cumberland Museum and Cultural Centre*
 - *Little Red Church*
 - *Others where feasible opportunities emerge*

OBJECTIVE 1-D: Forge a shared dream among cultural organizations for the advancement of all.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024 ongoing:** Develop a support program for co-presenting special events at the SWT:
 - Balance need and wider benefit
 - Align with SWTS values, goals, objectives
- **2024-2026:** Expand usage of the SWTS Communications Plan and Social Media Plan to support this shared dream

OBJECTIVE 1-E: Work with Partners to Enhance Downtown Courtenay Cultural Precinct.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024 ongoing:** See above (Mainstage) support City Cultural Plan
- **2024-2025:** See above (One Stop Hub) digital marquee and box office
- **2024-2025:** Explore event co-presentation opportunities with DCBIA and Downtown Cultural Partners (including Old Church Theatre and CVEX/VIMF *if DCBIA boundaries expand*)
- **2024-2026:** Explore shared marketing opportunities with above partners
- **2024-2026:** Explore regional "downtown" marketing opportunities (eg. Downtown Comox, Downtown Cumberland)





GOAL – Be a Vibrant and Sustainable Organization

.....

OBJECTIVE 2-A: Ensure the long-term financial viability of the SWTS.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023:** Agreement with City for SWTS to manage “Capital Development Fee” (surcharge) trust
- **2024-2025:** Ongoing: advocate with Comox, Cumberland and CV Regional District for equitable funding for SWTS
- **2023-2024:** Expand earned revenue opportunities such as bar sales, digital marquee advertising
- **2023-2025:** Launch and develop Legacy Campaign with financial partners
- **2024-2026:** Explore new government and private sector funding opportunities (eg. *Green Community Buildings Prog*)
- **2023-2026:** Improve sponsor acknowledgement (eg. lobby digital screens)

OBJECTIVE 2-B: Expand Opportunities for Younger Audiences/Artists.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Youth-forward presentations in Blue Circle Series, Sid Docs, Centre Stage at the Sid
- **2023-2024/2024-2025:** Youth-oriented presentations/co-presentations featuring indigenous youth/performers of interest to indigenous youth
- **2023-2024/2024-2025:** Youth-oriented presentations/co-presentations featuring content of interest to youth (eg. 2LGBTQAI+/Social Justice/youth with disabilities/climate action/anti-racism)
- **2024-2025 ongoing:** See above, community support program
- **2024-2025/2025-2026:** Increase ratio of multicultural performers for a younger demographic

OBJECTIVE 2-C: Increase SWTS Membership Base.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Review member benefits and recommend opportunities (host 1-2 “member socials” in 2023-24 season & ongoing)
- **2023-2025 ongoing:** Use SWTS Communications Plan and Social Media Plan to enhance marketing of SWTS Membership



OBJECTIVE 2-D: Expand Donor Base.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Work proactively with financial partners to communicate donor opportunities (especially within their client group)
- **2023-2024:** Donor info to be available at Blue Circle events
- **2024:** Host donor info event before tax season
- **2024:** Revamp Seat Plaque donation campaign
- **2024-2026:** Use SWTS Social Media Plan and Communications Plan to enhance marketing of SWTS donation/fundraising opportunities

OBJECTIVE 2-E: Ensure Comprehensive and Inclusive Nominations Process is Implemented for the Board of Directors.

STRATEGIES:

- **2024-2025:** Use SWTS Communications Plan and Social Media Plan to enhance information sharing of SWTS Board service opportunities
- **2024-2025:** Research options for youth, Indigenous/Elder Board liaisons or committees
- **2024-2026:** Develop and implement a regular program of Board skills development



GOAL – Improve the Capacity of our Team to Ensure Smooth Growth and Transition



OBJECTIVE 3-A: Ensure the Society has the financial resources to meet the theatre’s staffing (and service) requirements.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023:** Rate and Service review, followed by outreach with regional clients to ensure understanding of service costs, recoveries, and subsidies (municipal involvement in this process)
- **2023-2024:** Enhance existing earned revenue sources (bar sales, 50-50 draws etc./investment of surpluses)
- **2024-2025:** Participate in industry and municipal reviews of venue rates and services including ticket handling; keep SWTS rates within a fair and competitive range
- **2024-2025/2025-2026:** Improve business/corporate support options: digital marquee advertising, lobby screens advertising (use of Social Media and Communications Plan)
- **2024-2025/2025-2026:** Advocate for stronger financial support of SWTS from all valley municipalities (use of Social Media and Communications Plan)
- **2024-2025/2025-2026:** Work proactively with existing and new funders: take advantage of granting opportunities

OBJECTIVE 3-B: Support Robust Staff Development and Succession Plans.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Staffing levels in all departments evaluated (and increased if needed) to sufficient levels for all scenarios
- **2023-2024 ongoing:** Indigenous Elder involvement and/or Indigenous Reconciliation content in staff and volunteer training
- **2024-2025:** Promote EDI in hiring practices; ensure employment opportunities shared with Indigenous youth workers in the region
- **2023-2024:** Continue to rebuild volunteer program (resume volunteer and staff acknowledgement program)
- **2024-2025:** Work with industry and regional partners to create a phased transition/succession plan for key personnel (cross training, information management, organizational critical dates timeline, mentorship)
- **2024-2026:** Work with industry and regional partners (and funders) to resume regular professional development for junior and senior personnel (skills, safety, and EDI)
- **2024-2026:** See below – Infrastructure; include consideration of need for adequate staff and volunteer work and rest-break spaces

OBJECTIVE 3-D: Explore and build career development pathways for more stage technicians (and other theatre-specific skilled roles) in the Comox Valley and region.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024 ongoing:** Attend career fair presentations at local high schools, SD71 Aboriginal Education, and NIC
- **2023-2024 ongoing:** Educational tours for new personnel (interns) with V.I. Venues Group (eg. at Tidemark and Port Theatres)
- **2023-2024 ongoing:** Host workshops for theatre-related regional career-path programs: CVAG Youth Media Project, NIC Film Micro-Credential Program; High School techie clubs; Linc Youth Centre techie clubs
- **2024-2025:** Explore job sharing with Old Church Theatre and other nearby venues/events
- **2024-2025/2025-2026:** Explore industry mentorship programs:
 - Arts Leadership-Green Thumb Theatre BC
 - Rising Tides (Pact.ca)
 - National Ballet (Retiring Dancer Program)





GOAL – Improve Theatre Infrastructure to Support/ Fulfill the SWT’s Role as Premiere Performing Arts Facility in the Region.



OBJECTIVE 4-A: Implement a Legacy Giving Program focused on Theatre Infrastructure.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Initiate work with financial partners; see above, expand donor base
- **2023-2025 ongoing:** Support Legacy Giving Program with strong Investment policy and fundraising task force
- **2023-2025 ongoing:** Support Legacy Giving program with quality marketing materials, use of Social Media and Communication Plans
- **2023-2026:** Raise profile of infrastructure needs and future of the theatre in all municipal/regional advocacy
- **2024-2026:** Incorporate consideration of Facility Development expertise in staff and board recruitment

OBJECTIVE 4-B: Create a Solid Plan for Needed Improvements to Theatre and Systems.

STRATEGIES:

- **2023-2024:** Source engineering assessment of stage-overhead area (relative to lighting grid safety and rigging needs)
- **2023-2024:** Source expert theatre consultant and prepare Facility Needs Assessment Report and Recommendations
- **2023-2025:** Develop Hierarchy of Needs methodology for capital budgeting (must/should/could)
- **2023-2025:** Source matching funding for \$250k from Province for Stage Lighting Grid and Stage Elevator replacement/upgrade (eg. municipalities; Cultural Spaces of Canada Fund; foundations)
- **2024-2025 Ongoing:** See above re municipal/regional advocacy, also:
 - Carry out Public Education and Advocacy
 - Municipal role in providing cultural recreation (comparable level with parks/rec/sports)
 - Important role of theatre in Downtown Cultural Precinct
 - SWT is only full-service professionally-staffed theatre venue serving population of 75,000++
 - Realities of using a converted 1935 movie theatre as a live performance venue (space limitations (artistic/performers - accessibility/public-staff-volunteers)
 - Impact of new public building code for accessibility (restrooms, seats, lobby space)
- **2024-2025 ongoing:** Raise profile of infrastructure related to growing community/ changing use and future of the theatre in all municipal/regional advocacy
- **2024-2026 ongoing:** Incorporate consideration of Facility Development expertise in hiring for senior staff, recruitment of Board members

OBJECTIVE 4-C: Create a Business Case for a Studio Theatre aka “Black Box” Adjacent to SWT (Randy Wiwchar Plaza).

- **From 2022-2023:** List of clients turned away due to mainstage saturation
- **From 2022-2023 AND 2023-2024:** list of clients needing full theatre services but NOT needing the 500-seat capacity venue
- **2024-2025:** Architect to provide concept drawings for Studio Theatre and lobby expansion
- **2024-2025 Ongoing:** See above re youth focused programming (and others geared for studio theatre)
- **2024-2025 Ongoing:** See above re. youth/career-path various; (studio theatre as training venue)
- **2024-2025:** See above re: consultant Facility Needs – See Also Port Theatre, Studio Theatre Plan and similar from other BC Communities
- **2024 - 2025:** Interim step - Improve aesthetics of plaza level of theatre: attractive/ safe fencing - paint/ brighter colour scheme - awnings.

CONCLUSION

These goals, objectives and strategies were developed from the Board's work with expert facilitator Lori Baxter (<https://loribaxter.ca/>) in February 2023, as well as Management Team SWOT input. Some of the content above is new, some had already started while this plan was being developed, some was ongoing but needed to be formalized in our planning process. The Board and Management will review progress on our Strategic Plan at least annually.

We are looking forward to making progress in these vitally important areas, and are looking forward to working with our client base, our community and cultural partners, and our funders to make it all happen.

With respect and gratitude:

SWTS Board of Directors – SWTS Management Team – June 2023

