



The Big Picture: Creating a culture of possibility
November 16, 2012 at JW Marriott The Rosseau Muskoka

On Friday, November 16, a collection of people from a wide range of communities and sectors came together to dream and discuss what it means to live in this region and the place arts and culture should hold in the makeup of our communities.

The event was organized by Muskoka Chautauqua, funded by RTO12/Explorers' Edge and held at the JW Marriott The Rosseau Muskoka Resort and Spa in Minett. It included a youth roundtable in the morning and a community forum in the afternoon.

The day was all about dialogue, aimed at exploring new ways of bringing the wider community together to talk about the aspirations, resources and strengths for the development of Muskoka Chautauqua and the region.

Discussions began in the morning with a youth roundtable that brought young people from across the region together. Many of the participants talked about feeling isolated at times, remarking on how impressed they were by the number of like-minded young individuals in the region who attended the event. All of the young people voiced interest in meeting again. The day continued with lunch and a wider community forum in the afternoon. The day's facilitator was Michael Jones, a leadership educator, author, writer, composer and pianist, who spent much of the day facilitating from behind his keyboard.

Participants were asked to talk about the piece of the puzzle they brought to the discussion. They came from local communities such as Bala, Bracebridge, Port Carling, Rosseau, Gravenhurst, Wahta and Huntsville, from communities in the wider region including Parry Sound and Georgian Bay, from areas in southwestern Ontario including Bolton, Burlington, Hamilton Orillia, St. Catharines, Waterloo and Toronto, from northeastern Ontario including North Bay and Callander, and from Ohio in the US.

In addition to geography, the group covered a wide cross-section of sectors and included artists and architects, representatives from art organizations, environmental groups, educational institutions and community groups, members of the press, economic development officials, representatives from tourism organizations, local developers and business owners, government officials and members of other US Chautauquas.

Groups represented included arts organizations such as the Ontario Art Council, Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, Huntsville Festival of the Arts, Arts Council of Muskoka, Muskoka Lakes Spring Art Tour, ArtsSmarts, Arts Network for Children and Youth, Huntsville Arts Society, Muskoka Concert Association, Muskoka Opera Guild and The Stockey Centre. Also in attendance were representatives from RTO12/Explorers' Edge, Muskoka Tourism, Savour Muskoka, Muskoka Lakes Association, Muskoka Ratepayers Association, the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, Muskoka Community Foundation, Muskoka Community YWCA, Muskoka Community Network and FedNor.



The day's discussions seem to have ignited a spark – participants expressed interest in staying connected and having further discussions in the future. Muskoka Chautauqua is grateful for the support of its partners, Explorers' Edge and The Marriott, for making the event possible and to all of those who came and contributed for making the day such a special one. The organization eagerly looks forward to building on the momentum that was generated at The Big Picture event, with plans to hold similar roundtables in the future.