

## Arts groups converge for Culture Days

By Kevin Griffin; with files from Canwest News Service April 22, 2010

Organizers of Culture Days, a new national celebration of arts and culture, are hoping it becomes the country's biggest public participation program undertaken by the arts and cultural community.

The idea is for groups to present free activities for the public from Sept. 24-26. Culture Days was inspired by Quebec's annual Journées de la culture festival, which draws hundreds of thousands of people to events hosted by more than 8,000 artists and professionals.

Howard Jang, executive director at the Arts Club, said he was intrigued with the idea of Culture Days for two reasons. "It was a really grassroots approach to arts and culture and the community," he said. "Second, it wasn't an advocacy effort; it was about building relationships. I think from that point of view, it has potential for the long term."

Culture Days isn't a new national program with a budget to allow groups to apply for funding, he said. Arts organizations are encouraged to participate by holding free events to the public about what they're doing already. "Culture Days is a peek behind the curtain," Jang said.

So far, however, there are only two events confirmed for B.C. The Arts Club will be holding tours of its production facility and backstage tours of its Granville Island stage and the newly renovated Revue Stage and Arts Umbrella on Granville Island will be building a community multicultural mural.

Jang said he was hoping for more participation at this stage in B.C. but "totally understands" how groups feeling the pressure of funding cuts might struggle to participate in a new initiative, with no new money available to carry it out.

Still, Jang hopes that during the coming months arts and culture groups in B.C. become part of what could grow into the cultural equivalent of CBC's Hockey Day in Canada.

At the announcement of Culture Days in Toronto, Janice Price, CEO of Luminato and chair of Culture Day's Ontario panel, called Culture Days "ParticipACTION for the arts."

Organizations such as the National Ballet of Canada, the Canadian Opera Company and the Toronto International Film Festival Group are developing Culture Days projects. Amateur groups and individuals are also encouraged to participate.

Culture Days will take place in every province except Alberta. (Alberta's Culture Days will be Sept. 17-19, under the existing event, Alberta Arts Days.) Participants can register at [culture-days.ca](http://culture-days.ca)

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<http://www.vancouversun.com/Arts+groups+converge+Culture+Days/2937420/story.html>