

## **Strategic Research Plan Summary, 2006**

### **Research and Creative Activity**

Research and creative activity at The Banff Centre are best expressed and understood from a perspective of breadth and inclusiveness, in recognition of the diverse ways in which knowledge and understanding are developed and disseminated across the vast array of disciplines. The mission statement of The Banff Centre, characterizing the Centre as a “catalyst of creativity”, reflects both the strong programmatic focus on the performing and fine arts, and the Centre’s mandate to create and disseminate knowledge. Research and creative activity are part and parcel of the same process of generating and communicating ideas and understandings, so that they may benefit people as individuals, and as members of local, regional, national and international communities. The goal of research and creative activity at The Banff Centre is to elevate the human spirit and enhance the human condition.

### **Unique Environment for Research at the Banff Centre**

The Banff Centre has an environment that sets it clearly apart from other post-secondary institutions in Alberta and in Canada. Within the Alberta Post-secondary Learning Act, the province designates three classes of institutions – universities; colleges and institutes; and The Banff Centre. Thus, it is a part of the Post-secondary Learning environment, but distinctive from other providers. Created in 1933 as The Banff School of Fine Arts (and later changed to The Banff Centre for Continuing Education), the Banff Centre has long held a special function as a beacon of research and creative activity both in the Performing Arts and in the Fine Arts. Over time, very distinctive programming developed not only in these areas, but also in Aboriginal Arts, Management studies (now known as Leadership Development), in the area of Mountain Culture, including Mountain Environment studies, and in Aboriginal Leadership. In response to a number of strategic opportunities that enabled the integration of studies in the creative and fine arts with enhanced technologies, the Banff Centre also was able to develop leadership over the years through an initiative known as the Banff New Media Institute.

Another unique feature of The Banff Centre is its focus on life long learning opportunities, through the professional development of individuals who already have completed their accredited professional training. Therefore, while functioning as a part of the Post-Secondary Education system, the Banff Centre does not on its own provide instruction for academic credit, does not confer degrees or diplomas, and thus does not enroll a conventional post-secondary student body. Instead, the unique role of The Banff Centre is to provide continuing education through the professional development of individuals. In fulfilling this role, The Banff Centre has developed a unique residential campus facility in the Rocky Mountains, which provides accommodation for up to 450 program participants to engage in intensive short-term (i.e., up to 12 week maximum), as

well as in longer, term-specific residential learning experiences. This unique facility, clearly linked with the Post-secondary system in Alberta, and situation in a spectacular setting in Canada's first National Park, has provided opportunities to develop partnerships and initiatives unique in Canada. Thus, for example, the Banff Centre, in conjunction with the Pacific Institute of Mathematical Sciences and the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, established in 2003 the Banff International Research Station for Mathematical Sciences.

### **Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan**

The purpose of the Strategic Research Plan is to provide a roadmap for identifying present areas of strength and future areas of priority for research activities at The Banff Centre. The plan identifies the unique features of The Banff Centre, celebrates its historical and contemporary leadership role in research and creative activity in the arts (including aboriginal arts), mountain culture, and leadership development, and identifies a number of strategic opportunities that present themselves. Most importantly, the Strategic Research Plan outlines the areas of priority emphasis for research and creative activity over the next five years, and the manner in which these priorities will be actualized.

### **Areas of Priority for Research and Creative Activity**

#### **1. Fine Arts**

Research and creative activity in the Fine Arts encompasses a variety of cultural expressions, including creative writing, curatorial practices, aboriginal arts practices, creation with a variety of fine arts forms, as well as a diverse collection of electronic technology-enhanced forms of production. The research infrastructure used in support of research and creative activity in the fine arts includes a mixture of three research laboratories -- a visualization lab, a collaboration lab, and a mobile lab. The visualization lab, constructed with funding from CFI, provides the capacity for enhanced visualization techniques to be applied in artistically and culturally expressive projects, including its use for three dimensional animation studies. The collaboration lab, also developed with funds from CFI, provides for the capacity to engage in research initiatives at a distance (an important function for an institution in a remote location), and also enables research into the nature of collaborations themselves. The mobile lab provides for the ability to produce creative content for hand-held mobile devices, and to explore the potential transferability of knowledge over differing locations. To complement new media research in the Fine Arts, The Banff Centre supports art studio and curatorial gallery based research. The Walter Phillips Gallery also is conceptualized as a lab engaged with the examination of works of art, studio and curatorial practice, and the critical enquiry of artists and their engagement with the history of art and contemporary culture. Lab spaces used for Literary Arts also form part of the infrastructure for research and creative activity. The Banff Centre provides a significant programmatic focus on residencies in the fine arts area, with the laboratory-based research engaging with and influencing

program development. Programs provide significant opportunities for knowledge transfer.

## **2. Performing Arts**

The performing arts have been a central focus of the activities at The Banff Centre since its origin in 1933. The current programming orientations include notable programs in Music and Sound, Theatre Arts (including Set Design and Construction), Opera, and Dance as well as aboriginal performing arts. Supporting the research and creative activities in these areas is the Audio department. The Audio department also plays a supportive role in the Video production programming in the Fine Arts division, including research and creative activity involving High Definition (HD) television. The Banff Centre includes a number of performance and production venues such as, for example, the 959 seat Eric Harvie theatre, the 246 seat Margaret Greenham theatre, the 200 seat Rolston concert hall, several HDTV-equipped television studios of, and an audio recording studio. At present, there is no Audio research lab facility at The Banff Centre. The development of a surround sound Audio research lab therefore complements existing infrastructure, and enables a new generation of research into sound quality research that takes advantage of a diverse array of high quality venues. Thus, the Audio research laboratory will become the foundational infrastructure linking research opportunities across the array of performing arts and linking these with existing research facilities in the Fine Arts.

## **3. Mountain Culture**

The location of The Banff Centre in heart of the Rocky Mountains, in a setting designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, has provided for the development of both research and programmatic activities relating to Mountain Culture broadly conceived. At the Banff Centre, Mountain Culture is defined as studies of the character of human activity within mountain settings, and studies that examine environmental aspects of mountain locations, relating for example, to flora, fauna, mountain ecosystems, watersheds, climate change, amenity migration, and the like. Research and creative activity in this area is characterized by significant festival events (the Banff International Mountain Film Festival; the Banff International Mountain Book Festival), conferences, summits and workshops (for example, Mountain Cultures at Risk; Mountains as Water-towers; Rosenberg Mountain Water Forum), the publication of books and journal articles, and the hosting of a variety of websites and/or web-based discussion groups (for example, the Canadian node of Mountain Forum), as well as research in a web-based film archive.

## **4. Leadership Development**

In March 1954, The Banff Centre hosted its first two-week course in Executive Development. Over the next 50 years, Leadership Development emerged as a major research and program focus of The Banff Centre. At the core of the Leadership Development program is a commitment to infuse a creative arts base to leadership development research and training, coupled with an environmental/outdoor experiential

orientation. The result is a unique programmatic orientation that provides a distinctive character to leadership development at The Banff Centre. With the recent appointment of a new Director of Leadership Development, there is a commitment to expand the amount of research activity that occurs in support of the Leadership Development programming. This research is supported through a Leadership Learning Lab, which combines studies of programmatic effectiveness with translational efficiency.

Complementary to the Leadership Development program is the Aboriginal Leadership program, with a long and proud history at The Banff Centre. Participation in the Aboriginal Leadership program is characterized by The Banff Centre's signature "residency" experience. This program area has developed a number of partnerships with the aboriginal community, and with university-based researchers, to further the understanding of effective strategies of capacity building within the aboriginal community. This partnership includes the guidance provided by its International Aboriginal Program Council, and participation in joint programs, such as the Harvard University project on American Indian Developments. As with the Leadership Development program, research and programming

## **5. Mathematics research**

Since 2002, The Banff Centre has been host to the Banff International Research Station for Mathematical Innovation (BIRS). The BIRS program provides residential space, meeting facilities, computer laboratories and amenities for mathematicians from around the world to convene for short periods of time (typically three days to one week) for intensive periods of discussion, exploration, discovery and dissemination. Each year, BIRS brings approximately 2000 mathematicians to the Banff Centre, of whom approximately 750 are from Canada, 750 from the United States, and 500 from elsewhere, to focus their discussions on ongoing challenges in mathematics, from the highly theoretical to those grounded in contemporary experience. The BIRS initiative is a partnership between the Banff Centre, the Pacific Institute of Mathematical Sciences (PIMS) and the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI), with significant base funding from NSF, NSERC, Alberta Innovation and Science, among others.

## **Inter-institutional and Inter-sectoral collaborations**

The unique structure and mandate of The Banff Centre combine to ensure that research and creative activity are nourished through a web of partnerships. The most extensive example of this partnership approach is through the BIRS initiative described above. Likewise, in our visualization lab, we include program participants from universities, governments and the private sector. In addition, we have established a number of ongoing research relationships whereby university faculty members collaborate during dedicated periods through the use of this lab. This type of deep partnership and collaboration can be seen across the program areas of The Banff Centre, whether with environmental scientists engaged with our Mountain Culture program, with novelists and poets in our creative writing programs, with aboriginal scholars in our aboriginal leadership program, or with audio engineers and professors of music in our audio programs. The most recently-

negotiated partnership is for participants from Cyberport of Hong Kong to participate in our innovative Accelerator program, an initiative of the Banff New Media Institute within Fine Arts. In brief, collaborations are key to the business model of The Banff Centre.

### **Support for the Development of Research**

The Banff Centre has undertaken a number of initiatives to support the growth of the research enterprise. These initiatives include:

- The affirmation by the Board of Governors of the importance of research and creative activity to the mandate of The Banff Centre
- The creation of an Office of Research
- The appointment of a Director of Research
- The creation of a Research Development Award program for the provision of seed funding for the preparation of external research awards
- The nurturing of partnership arrangements with universities, industry, government, and research funding organizations
- The appointment of the Director of Research to the Program Council of The Banff Centre
- The review of the research policy framework, with a goal of adopting a set of research policies
- The President of The Banff Centre chairs, and the Director of Research serves as a member, of the Association of Alberta Colleges and Technical Institutes Innovation Management Committee

### **Planning and Approval of Strategic Research Plan**

The Strategic Research Plan is endorsed by the Program Council, the group of senior managers responsible for each of the Programming areas at The Banff Centre. Formally, the Program Council recommends the adoption of the Strategic Research Plan to the Vice-President Programming. The Vice-President Programming recommends the adoption of the Strategic Research Plan to the Executive Officers of The Banff Centre. The Executive Officers consist of the President and the three Vice-Presidents. The Strategic Research Plan is approved by the President, on the recommendation of the Executive Officers.