

Introduction

**LORI BURKE, PRESIDENT – CRAFT ALLIANCE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAPE BRETON CENTRE FOR CRAFT & DESIGN**

CRAFT Alliance has been working diligently over the past months on the ACTS pan-Atlantic consultation. We want to thank all the craft producers, retail buyers, industry representatives and also the Craft Alliance board for their continued support in helping to move the project and the craft community in Atlantic Canada forward. This newsletter will update everyone that has participated in the process and to provide information on how Craft Alliance plans to move forward with the Atlantic Craft Trade Show in the coming years. The craft industry has faced many challenges in recent years and we hope everyone will join us in creating a positive environment where the wholesale craft sector in the region can grow and evolve. ■

» ENVISION 20/20

Framework FOR Success

CRAFT ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER | JUNE 2015

“The consultations provided a clear affirmation of the continued importance of the Atlantic Craft Trade Show in supporting the wholesale production and sale of handmade craft in the Atlantic region.”

- ANDREA ARBIC

New Focus for ACTS

BERNARD BURTON, DIRECTOR

IN the months since ACTS 2015, our team has been working to consult, review and develop new ideas for the Atlantic Craft Trade Show. The timing for change could not be better! As most of you know, the current ACTS venue is expected to close at the end of 2016. This provides Craft Alliance with the opportunity to consider new ideas and concepts for the future. The consultation process conducted by A.L.

Arbic Consulting was thorough and concise and we are very pleased with the results. We are outlining here, some of the ideas and concepts going forward for 2016 and beyond! It has only been a few short weeks since we wrapped up the final consultations and meetings and we are well on our way to developing a rejuvenated ACTS for the future. Stayed tuned throughout Summer 2015 for more details as they develop. ■

Priorities for Change

**SUSAN HANRAHAN, BOARD MEMBER, CRAFT ALLIANCE
STEERING COMMITTEE, PAN-ATLANTIC CONSULTATION
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NOVA SCOTIA DESIGNER CRAFTS COUNCIL**

FROM BUYERS RESPONSE SURVEY

Do you perceive value in seeing a Handmade Product in person before ordering it for your shop?

YES

97.06%

NO

2.94%

I'm a bit of a stats geek and so, as a member of the steering committee overseeing the recent Pan-Atlantic Consultation about the future of the Atlantic Craft Trade Show, I found the information coming in from all four Atlantic Provinces via surveys, interviews and focus groups to be fascinating... and most informative. What I found most enlightening is that what buyers perceive as priorities for change are not the same as what exhibitors perceive as priorities for change.

Time and again we heard from our exhibitors that we need to attract more buyers to ACTS. However, their suggestions on how to go about doing so were not necessarily reflected on the buyers' side of the equation. The buyers want to see new and interesting work, they want to network with exhibitors, and they want to learn about trends. While some buyers did mention things like ambiance, quality of food, development of an online catalogue, the timing of event, etc., etc., exhibitors overall placed a higher priority

on those issues. Buyers consistently said they want new product and the opportunity to communicate face-to-face with exhibitors.

The Craft Alliance Board is now armed with a wealth of data which will inform our discussions and decisions going forward. We are excited about the future of the Atlantic Craft Trade Show, and look forward to working with both our buyers and exhibitors to ensure this key tool in the development of Atlantic Canadian craft remains strong and viable for the future. ■

CREATING A PATH

**ANNE MANUEL, BOARD MEMBER, CRAFT ALLIANCE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CRAFT COUNCIL OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**

IT'S great to be part of the Craft Alliance — an organization that sees the challenges, consults widely and then works together to make the necessary changes. That's how we have approached the challenges facing the Atlantic Craft Trade Show (ACTS). Wide consultation with exhibitors and retailers, extensive research of show

data, and a lengthy discussion at strategy meetings in Charlottetown this spring has resulted in exciting ideas. The Craft Alliance membership represents a diverse range of constituents — we are training institutions, craft industry organizations and government supporters — and we each bring a different experience to the

discussion. Our perspectives may be different, but our goals are shared, and our Charlottetown meetings enabled a thorough understanding of the issues facing us, and a path to a workable plan for the future. The Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Craft Alliance Board extends its thanks and appreciation to the consultants, Andrea & Leah, who took on this work on our behalf, and looks forward, with excitement, to the 2016 Atlantic Craft Trade Show. ■

Planning for the Future

ANDREA ARBIC & LEAH HAMILTON, CONSULTANTS
ACTS PAN-ATLANTIC CONSULTATION
A.L. ARBIC CONSULTING

In January 2015, Craft Alliance sent out a call for proposals for a pan-Atlantic consultation about the future of the Atlantic Craft Trade Show. We were so pleased to be selected to lead this consultation process, having worked with the Craft Alliance in the past and seeing firsthand the importance of the work the organization undertakes.

Over the course of 4 months, we analyzed ACTS's show statistics; conducted focus groups in St. John's, Halifax and Charlottetown; reviewed the results of exhibitor and buyer surveys conducted by ACTS staff; and carried out numerous telephone interviews with exhibitors, buyers, Craft Alliance board members and other industry representatives. In total, nearly 300 interview, survey, and focus session responses were gathered during this process, representing a diverse mix of experiences, views and ideas. The discussions we had were lively and the feedback we received was considered and insightful. We would like to thank everyone who took part in the consultations for your

time, and your thoughtful contribution to the process.

The consultations provided a clear affirmation of the continued importance

of the Atlantic Craft Trade Show in supporting the wholesale production and sale of handmade craft in the Atlantic region. We heard that there is no substitute for bringing together craftspeople, their products and wholesale buyers all in one place, at

one time. Craftspeople and store owners alike benefit financially, professionally and personally from their participation in ACTS.

While the consultations indicated that overall levels of satisfaction with ACTS are positive, we also heard clearly that changes need to be made to ensure

that ACTS continues to be a successful and worthwhile experience for everyone involved. At the top of this list of changes is the pressing need to attract more exhibitors and more buyers to the show. The consultations identified a number of possible changes to the show format, location, exhibitor types, recruitment strategies and communications that could be used to attract more show participants. Following the presentation of the consultation findings to the Craft Alliance, the Board affirmed that it will make the recruitment of more exhibitors and buyers its highest priority in the immediate future, including capitalizing on a change in show venue in 2017.

In addition to affirming the desire to see ACTS continue, the consultation process also pointed to a number of additional initiatives that Craft Alliance could undertake to supplement the work of ACTS. The board of Craft Alliance has expressed a commitment to exploring the viability of a number of these supplementary activities in the longer term.

ACTS has an almost 40 year track record of achievement behind it. Ahead lies the promise of a renewed future for ACTS, as well as other exciting opportunities to support the wholesale production and sales of handmade Atlantic Canadian craft. We thank you again for your contribution to the consultation process and hope you will join the board and staff of Craft Alliance in making these plans for the future a success. ■

"Our perspectives may be different, but our goals are shared."

- ANNE MANUEL

FROM BUYERS RESPONSE SURVEY

In the past 5 years have your shop sales:

INCREASED

51.46%

DECREASED

22.33%

STAYED THE SAME

26.21%

Framework for Success

BERNARD BURTON

FROM BUYERS RESPONSE SURVEY

What percentage of your shop inventory is Handmade in Atlantic Canada?

100%

18.10%

75%–100%

17.14%

50%–75%

14.29%

25%–50%

17.14%

LESS THAN 25%

33.33%

DEVELOPMENTS for 2016 and beyond! The consultation process has given Craft Alliance the clear mandate to implement changes to the ACTS trade show. In consideration of a required change of venue in the near future, the board has decided to implement a multi-year approach to transforming the ACTS trade show into a vibrant resource for the Atlantic craft community.

There will be some modest changes for the ACTS 2016 event, with our focus being on 2017 and beyond at a new venue. We expect it will take another 6-8 weeks to prepare and implement many of the ideas for 2016 that are expressed in the consultant's report. I am highlighting here some of the key items that we will focus on in the coming months, and we will be providing more communications and updates as we move forward.

- » **Location:** ACTS will remain at its current location for 2016. We will be making some initial changes for 2016 that will lead into a more enhanced series of changes for 2017-2020.
- » **Exhibitor Recruitment:** Develop incentives for Emerging makers beyond their first year at ACTS. Investigate alternate booth size options for 2017 in a new location. Develop a *Cash n' Carry* option for those exhibitors requesting the ability to include this in their wholesale offerings.
- » **Buyer Recruitment:** Work with our craft industry partners and exhibitors to identify key craft buyers from across Canada to develop an expanded Canadian Incoming Buyer Program. Develop a "Buyer Event" that will engage

- buyers in learning about Industry Trends as identified in the Consultant's report. We are working on a Buyer Breakfast that will include a Keynote Speaker and also incorporate our Awards for Excellence. The idea was also brought forward to develop "A Craft Buyers Network", where we assist craft retailers in business development and sourcing new products by developing online resources that identify Atlantic Canadian products.
- » **NEW Venue 2017-2020:** The Craft Alliance board has accepted a proposal from the new Halifax Convention Centre www.halifaxconventioncentre.com that will see the ACTS trade show remain in downtown Halifax for the immediate future at this new state of the art convention facility. This may include a rebranding of ACTS with more opportunities for space usage in different ways and investigating new concepts for trade show presentation.
- » **Invite Maritime Gift Show and Traders Forum** to work on a new show concept for 2017 at the new Halifax Convention Centre that will engage buyers from across Canada to attend a must-see Atlantic Canadian event.
- » **NEW Partners:** We will be investigating and approaching new partnerships >>>

FROM BUYERS RESPONSE SURVEY

Why Do You Go To Trade Shows? (Buyers were asked to rate responses by priority)

#1 PRIORITY

To See New Products

#2 PRIORITY

To Network with Existing Vendors

#3 PRIORITY

To Learn About Trends

with other industry organizations that can provide value added aspects for our attending buyers and the overall the trade show in the short term and an expanded capacity for the new location in 2017. Ideas presented include: apparel sector, design, gourmet food products, cultural products.

» **Communications Plan:** Craft

Alliance is working to develop a new communications plan that will include new monthly newsletters to exhibitors and buyers. Development of an enhanced website that will include: online profiles for wholesale producers, online networking forums and educational opportunities. Craft Alliance as an organization will also develop new communications

tools to inform the industry of other projects and activities conducted by the Alliance.

» **Product Development:** NEW Products!

This was identified as the #1 issue facing retail buyers attending ACTS and other trade shows. Finding NEW, Original, Unique products for their shops is key to their business development and sustainability. This is not only new emerging makers, but established producers as well. The development of new products and showing new product at trade shows should be front and centre in everyone's business

planning. Craft Alliance will

work toward a long-term

goal of developing

resource materials and

educational programs

that assist with this

process. ■

"The buyers want to see new and interesting work, they want to network with exhibitors, and they want to learn about trends."

- SUSAN HANRAHAN



Atlantic Craft Trade Show
Foire commerciale de l'artisanat en Atlantique

We gratefully acknowledge the funding support of our provincial government funding partners in this initiative.

