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Fort McMurray, Alberta
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Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
9909 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4

Your Worship and Members of Council,

I'm writing to express my support of Keyano College receiving the full requested Sustaining Grant funding of \$559,615.00 for the Keyano Theatre & Arts Centre.

Keyano Theatre has played an immense role in establishing and maintaining theatre and the performing arts in Wood Buffalo for over forty years; not only as a producer of community theatre, but as a supporter of other arts organizations, a partner, and an arts champion.

I am an artist who has dedicated her life to the arts, most of which time has been spent as a citizen of Fort McMurray. I began my journey as an immigrant from the United Kingdom moving directly to Fort McMurray in 1981. As a high school student back then, Keyano theatre was my saving grace after auditioning for a musical. I instantly fell in love with the stage, felt so welcomed, less homesick and discovered that I did have many talents. The Theatre family inspired this seventeen year old beyond words. I loved working with people from all ages and backgrounds, learning new skills and being led by professionals who taught me; how to read a script, developing character, sing,, dance, move on stage and stagecraft. I gained huge confidence and learned the definition of hard work. There are few community groups where people of all ages and backgrounds come together as one. Theatre is that place. My experience at Keyano influenced my career choices. I moved away to pursue my education in Design, Education and Drama. I returned to Fort McMurray in 1996 as a teacher. An influencing decision to come back was knowing that the arts community was so strong.

I was engaged through the Arts Centre with various courses over the years. In gratitude to instructors such as Garry Berteig, Erin Shwab and Carol Breen who offered courses in painting and drawing. The gallery was important to our community groups, particularly connecting with the schools I worked at. Over forty years, I have been involved in close to forty shows as an actor and working backstage in the theatre, most of which have been at the Keyano Arts centre. I worked with various directors and artistic teams such as; Alan Roberts, Darold Roles, Paul Gelineau, Dick Mells (the original Theatre Arts director) and many more. After working in other theatre communities across the province, Keyano Theatre is a unique and special place that has never failed to create great performances and learning opportunities in a professional setting. As a Fine Arts Teacher, I have had students who are greatly inspired by their time with Keyano Theatre and many former students and friends have gone on to find successful careers in the arts.

I am retiring and moving away in 2023, since my family are now all living on the West Coast. I will miss Keyano Theatre and Arts Centre greatly and know it will leave a big hole in my heart. I want others to have what I have had, a chance to connect, develop skills, untap talent and grow in the arts. If this is taken away then many will lose out. Some will not stay as long in our community due to not finding their tribe or outlet, some will not develop social skills, some will be denied opportunities to explore talents, some will miss out on that need for community, some will be denied the chance to grow and many will lose employment. The spectators and patrons of the arts will miss out greatly too. Fort McMurray is a great community of sports, recreation and arts. Keyano Theatre has been the nucleus of the arts and without investment, it will cause a downward spiral for too many.

As a Municipal council , I urge you to make a difference for our community arts programming with your investment in Keyano Theatre and Arts facility. It needs serious time to develop and find creative solutions, it needs investment and a team who can foresee that the arts are just as important now as they have ever been.

As stated in the Municipal Development Plan “supporting the region’s cultural development enhances quality of life for all, generates economic benefits, and facilitates the additional attraction and retention of newcomers and their families. Relative to other comparable municipalities in Alberta, Wood Buffalo is underserved in terms of arts and culture facilities. Investing in the region’s arts and cultural infrastructure can strengthen regional pride and identity, as can promoting and supporting the local arts and cultural sector, and integrating culture and heritage into the design of neighbourhoods.”

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Terri Mort