

**City Manager's Office Report to
2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Assessment
Committee
2018 June 26**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
OPC2018-0783**

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2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Working In Partnership to Advance A Cultural Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the potential Cultural and Educational components should The City decide to bid for the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (OPWG). This area of work is being led by the Bid Corporation (Calgary 2026) through consultants Karen Ball and Burke Taylor, whose experience is outlined in Attachment 1. This overview is intended to give the 2026 OPWG Assessment Committee an understanding of possible Cultural Olympiad activities, The City's possible role in partnering to deliver aspects of the Cultural Olympiad and identifying how The City may leverage these opportunities to advance The City's vision, plans and strategies, particularly those in the Cultural Plan for Calgary.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2026 OPWG Assessment Committee recommends that Council:

Receive report OPC 2018-0783 for information.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

Previous Council direction can be found in Attachment 2.

BACKGROUND

Olympics and Paralympic Games typically include programs and activities to increase intercultural understanding and promote the prospect of world peace. Culture is enshrined in the Olympic Charter as the second of three pillars of the Olympic Movement (along with Sport and Sustainability.)

The 1988 Winter Games contributed significantly to the evolution of arts, festivals and educational programs in Calgary. Major festivals and arts organizations were formed including the Calgary Opera, Alberta Theatre Projects, One Yellow Rabbit, the Calgary International Children's Festival, and the Calgary Folk Festival, and the Centre for Performing Arts was opened. One legacy of the Olympic Winter Games Organizing Committee 1988, the XV Olympic Winter Games, was the development of the Olympic School Program, which now includes 100 free online education modules and in-class supports available to educators around the world through the Canadian Olympic Committee.

Over the last 20 years, the Cultural Olympiad of the Olympic Games has evolved into a multi-year festival designed to maximize public participation and cultural and social legacies in the lead up to and during the Games. Vancouver 2010 presented a Cultural Olympiad over four years which included a combination of 650 free and ticketed performances and events and resulted in more than 5.8 million people experiencing local, national and international culture as part of the 2010 Games.

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INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The Cultural Olympiad is a required element of any Olympic and Paralympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) wants to ensure it presents the Games as the blending of sport, culture and education.

The “Culture Function” within the organizing committee for the Games leads the planning and development of the following required programs:

- Handover Ceremony
- 2023-2026 Cultural Olympiad
- Organizing committee role in Celebration/Live Sites
- Education Programs

The Culture Function also contributes to the planning and implementation of programs and activities, such as:

- Opening and Closing Ceremonies
- Medal Ceremonies
- Torch Relays
- Olympic/Paralympic Experience
- Olympic Truce
- Athletes Villages activation
- Venue and Line-up Entertainment
- Partners’ Programs and Activations
- Sponsorship Development and activation

Now that Calgary 2026 is incorporated, it will continue to engage with partners, community stakeholder groups and the community at large. Calgary 2026 will work collaboratively with partners to develop shared goals, and the Culture Function will be one aspect of the public engagement program. The Culture Function of Calgary 2026 will also lead or participate in planning and producing Bid-period public programs, events and initiatives which includes input into public engagement/consultation activities, bid partner and sponsor activations, and other special events (e.g. possible Bid Celebration Festival, etc.).

Role of The City of Calgary

Administration believes that the Culture Olympiad is critical to the success of an Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Should The City of Calgary pursue a bid and be chosen to host the Games, The City of Calgary, as host city, along with the Government of Alberta (GoA) and Government of Canada (GoC), would have responsibilities to deliver and partner on aspects of the Cultural Olympiad. Some of the expectations of The City are included in the IOC’s form of Host City Agreement. Based on past Games, involvement in these activities can include:

- Making City facilities and public spaces available for celebrations and events
- Producing activations or Live Sites in the city during the Games which are large, secure, branded, family-oriented public gathering places where all citizens can share an

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Olympic/Paralympic experience with Calgarians and visitors. Large screens would offer live and pre-recorded TV feeds of sport competitions, and both large stages and screens live experience of the arts and popular culture.

- Programs which are undertaken in partnership with local neighbourhoods, recreation centres and organizations such as Business Improvement Areas to activate the city and engage the public and visitors in the run up to and during the Games.
- City involvement in the celebration of the Torch Relays

In the lead up to the Games, there are many ways The City could enhance its regular programming and engage its many partners in the area of arts and culture to highlight and contribute to the Cultural Olympiad. Once the bid submission is received by all governments, The City Secretariat team will need to conduct a review of the Cultural and Educational components to get a better understanding of The City's responsibilities.

A host city has few restrictions on how it can partner and leverage the opportunity of the Games. This will be a clear opportunity for the advancement of Calgary's Cultural Plan, and the plans of civic partners such as Calgary Arts Development's "Living A Creative Life," and Calgary Economic Development and Tourism Calgary's plans.

The consultants have already sought information from The City's Culture division in Recreation, and further engagement is planned within this process. The City's Secretariat team is planning to continue to examine how a potential Games would contribute to the development of the Cultural Plan, facilitate conversations and workshops looking for leveraging opportunities with partners and further refine The City's scope and scale of participation in this area, including a proposed budget impact. The City's budget for the Cultural Function of the Games would be incremental to The City's overall contribution and cost of the Games, and this budget impact will be considered as part of The City's analysis of whether to pursue a bid.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The 2026 OPWG Cultural and Educational components are being developed by Calgary 2026 (BidCo). To date, the team has engaged the following stakeholders who have provided input into the approach and initial plan:

- Government of Canada, Sport Canada
- Government of Alberta, 2026 Secretariat
- City of Calgary, Chair 2026 OPWG Assessment Committee
- Town of Canmore, 2026 Secretariat and Cultural Leads
- Canadian Olympic Committee
- Canadian Paralympic Committee
- Government and Public Arts Development Agencies and Organizations including:
 - Government of Alberta Arts Branch (Alberta Foundation for the Arts)
 - City of Calgary (The City Secretariat team)
 - Calgary Arts Development Authority (CADA)
 - Arts Commons
 - Calgary Economic Development (CED)
 - Calgary Heritage Authority
 - Edmonton Arts Council

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Strategic Alignment

The recommendations in this report align with the Council Priority of a Well-Run City. In addition, the proposed cultural and educational components support and align with the Draft 2026 OPWG Vision, Mission and Values.

The Cultural and Educational components of the plan also align with many City of Calgary policies, including:

- Imagine Calgary;
- Sustainability Policy;
- Cultural Plan for Calgary;
- Living a Creative Life (CADA);
- Building on Our Energy- an Economic Strategy for Calgary (CED);
- Calgary's Ultimate Host City Destination Strategy (Tourism Calgary);
- Indigenous Policy;
- Calgary Civic Art Policy
- City Centre Policy;
- Partnership Policy; and
- Triple Bottom Line Policy.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Because the Cultural Olympiad and Education programs and activities are not tied to specific venues, geography, or Games-time dates, activities can take place locally, regionally, nationally, or even internationally. With a priority on maximizing citizen and visitor participation and engagement to achieve organizing committee and host city objectives and legacies, Games-time-only activities have evolved to multi-year programs in addition to those at Games-time. Arts festivals have also evolved in scope to become an inclusive showcase of diverse arts and popular culture. The Cultural Olympiad and education programs provide an opportunity for citizens locally, regionally and nationally to see themselves participating in the Games. This is the area where citizens can have an experience that is outside the sport aspect, and where their experience and participation is not limited and can often occur within a public and free setting.

Additional triple bottom line impacts to City policies and goals will be determined once Calgary 2026 releases the proposed Cultural Components as part of the Government Submission and once The City Secretariat Programming work stream has an opportunity to do further work in this area.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

Financial implications of any programs and activities will be assessed.

There are several considerations The City of Calgary will need to make in regards to cultural and educational plans in the coming months. There may be budgetary impacts depending on the direction from the 2026 OPWG Assessment Committee and Council.

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Current and Future Capital Budget:

There may be a future capital budget ask but this has not been fully assessed at this time.

Risk Assessment

Receiving timely guidance and direction from the OPWG Assessment Committee will support Administration in ensuring risk is mitigated in a timely and ongoing manner.

The 2026 OPWG Cultural and Educational components need to meet submission requirements should Calgary choose to submit a bid for the 2026 OPWG. To ensure this, the Cultural and Educational components are being developed by Calgary 2026 consultants with significant bidding and Games experience.

The 2026 OPWG Cultural and Educational components must align with Calgary's short, medium and long-term cultural and educational aspirations for Calgarians. To ensure this, the team is working collaboratively with stakeholders and is ensuring that the approach and plan aligns with policies, plans and strategies.

To ensure the 2026 OPWG cultural and educational components resonate with Calgarians, Albertans and Canadians, best practices in cultural and educational plans from other host city organizing committees (e.g. Calgary 1988, Vancouver 2010) are being reviewed and the information will be used to develop the 2026 OPWG plan should Calgary decide to submit a bid. The goal is to put Calgarians, Albertans, and Canadians at the heart of planning the Cultural Olympiad.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

This report provides an overview of the 2026 OPWG Cultural and Educational components. The update includes the history of the Cultural Olympiad and a review of the Calgary 1988 cultural experience. Also included are an overview of the approach, initial thoughts and the next steps for the 2026 OPWG should Calgary choose to submit a bid.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Attachment 1 – Biographies: Karen Ball and Burke Taylor
2. Attachment 2 – Previous Council Direction