

## Band/Leader



Gertraud Martchin conducts the Dawson Creek Kiwanis Band at the community bands concert in Fort George Park on Saturday.

JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

## Arts Council wants gallery

An umbrella group for Prince George arts groups is still waiting after 18 months to learn if it can manage the current Prince George Art Gallery building when it becomes vacant.

The aging two-storey building on 15th Avenue becomes vacant by July with the move to the new building downtown, but the Community Arts Council still doesn't know if it will be able to move in.

City council will make no commitment until the Official Community Plan review is complete, the manager of real estate services for the City of Prince George wrote to the arts council this month. City hall administration will recommend a use for the building at that time, explains Ian Wells. The OCP review is expected to be finished by December.

The arts council made a presentation to city council in October 1998 expressing an interest in acquiring the building, says current president Jo-Ann Merkel.

If it got access, the arts council would move its administrative office and ticket-selling operation from nearby Studio 2880, she says. The second floor of the current art gallery building would be used for the Art Gallery of Honour, an arts counterpart to the

Prince George Sports Hall of Fame. Eight inductees have been admitted already and more will be chosen every two years, she explains.

"We have write-ups on all of them and pictures, and we want to display it."

If the acquisition is approved, the current consignment sales area for local artisans would be expanded and the arts council would have more rental space. The Prince George Symphony Orchestra, for example, has expressed interest in moving its office to the main floor from its current location on Studio 2880's second floor, Mrs. Merkel says.

In a letter to city hall last month, she wrote that the arts council is working toward setting up a board development training centre for all volunteer boards in the Prince George area and creating an Internet work station for people without access to the Internet.

Whatever happens with the Official Community Plan, she hopes the current art gallery building will remain part of the arts community.

While it's waiting for a

decision from city hall, the arts council will operate as usual, she says.

The arts council is a not-for-profit society representing almost 40 local arts organizations as well as individuals. It's operated Studio 2880 since 1976, says Mrs. Merkel, adding the council pays for operating expenses.



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