

'Get the word out about Halton Hills' says music industry expert

Introduced as a "giant of the industry", music publicist Richard Flohil entranced a sold-out audience at the opening night of the seventh annual Cultural Symposium at the Acton Town Hall Centre, Friday.

Flohil was the keynote speaker at the two-day Symposium, intended to bring up-to-date information and learning opportunities to Halton Hills cultural organizations, individual artists and businesses.

Flohil charmed the audience with amusing stories and lessons learned over his 40-year career in the entertainment business, that included several lifetime achievement awards. As publicist for Canadian icons Serena Ryder, k. d. lang, Colin James and countless other notables, he has amassed a vast array of anecdotes. He also attended the Saturday session, providing one-on-one 15-minute sessions with attendees.

Flohil outlined a number of tips on the theme for this year's Symposium, Helping culture grow.

"There is a secret to this, but it's not rocket science," he said.

1. Get the word out about Halton



Richard Flohil was the keynote speaker at the Halton Hills Cultural Symposium Friday.
Photo courtesy of Manny Martins

Hills. "Try dragging people like me out of Toronto to enjoy your culture here," he said, promising he would be back, when it's not "so damn cold."

2. Having a plan (Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan, 2010-2060) is good, but the plan is to encourage artistic endeavor, and it's important to get younger people involved.

3. Start small, build solidly, and grow incrementally, and keep control, trying not to let personalities and poli-

tics get in the way, and benchmark as the plan progresses.

4. Get to know the media in your community, and "make friends with them, and keep your communications with them objective and factual."

5. Keep a healthy mailing list of supporters, fans, media, etc. "It is one of the most important thing any cultural organization should have." Flohil's list, for example, has more than 4,000 names and contact info on it.

6. Make a video of who you are, what you are and why you do. "It is an invaluable tool"

7. Create events to raise your profile. "Promote your art, promote your cultural efforts Do it assiduously, do it all the time, do not give up until at least to 2060 when it's going to be done. Our task— your task— whether or not we make art ourselves, our job is to make art happen," Flohil said. "It needs imagination, it needs knowledge, particularly in all the new forms of communication, it needs energy, time and effort, sometimes money and always the support of government, locally, provincially, and federally. It's your money, get some of it back to support this."

"Finally the rewards for ourselves, for our neighbours, for our community are invaluable, so let's get on with it," he concluded.

Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong, who stopped by Friday night on his way home from Ottawa, told the audience that, "arts and culture are a powerful way to communicate and understand the world around us, in a way that reason, science and tech-

nology cannot do....If we are going to live to our fullest potential as a community an integral part of that is the development of culture."

He said the best arts and culture in Canada is not found in the big cities but in the small towns such as Halton Hills.

Chong also urged the various organizations and groups in the audience to begin considering ways to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017, adding there will be funding available.

"The Roundtable's main purpose is to serve as a culture catalyst in the Halton Hills community," said its chair Chris Macewan, in her introductory remarks, noting some of its triumphs in 2014 included mentoring students who organized the Rock the Hills Festival and the opening of the Red Door Gallery in the Georgetown Legion.

She hoped the many new registrants would be inspired— about 80 people attended both days. Among those receiving recognition were longtime award-winning animators Dave and Dale Cox of Glen Williams.

Continued on page 30

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