

Arts & Culture

Introduction

There are tremendous artistic and cultural resources in Baja California Sur, yet inadequate funding and public interest to move beyond basic programming and infrastructure. The advent of a state Council for Culture and the Arts (similar to those in other Mexican states) would encourage potential partnerships and funding that could benefit cultural activities.

In Baja California Sur, the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA) holds most of the responsibility for coordinating cultural activities. The present state administration has created financial funds for cultural projects, including the State Fund for Culture and the Arts, Programs to Support Municipal and Community Culture, Special Program for Children's Culture, "Wings and Roots for Boys and Girls in Baja California Sur," and program to train art promoters and artists.

Key Findings

1. Museums/Cultural Centers

With a total of ten museums, Baja California Sur is considered one of the states in Mexico with the least

number of museums, together with Quintana Roo (11) and Campeche (5).² However, the national mean of inhabitants per museum is 92,139 while in Baja California Sur it is 42,404³ inhabitants per museum. Using the criteria of population per facility, Baja California Sur appears to be relatively well off. Thirty out of the thirty-two state capital cities in Mexico have four or more museums;⁴ La Paz has six, plus it enjoys more museums than all other cities in the state.

One of the main challenges for museums in Baja California Sur is a lack of financial resources for the conservation, restoration, and acquisition of collections and individual pieces. Hurricanes have caused severe damage to buildings, as well as to collections. In addition, access to museums is difficult for those in rural areas; extension services and traveling exhibits would be welcome for these audiences.⁵

In addition to museums, Mexico has close to 1,600 cultural houses and cultural centers, managed and funded by both public and private institutions. These institutions are dedicated to cultural dissemination, informal art education, cultural promoter training, and art workshops for students of all levels.⁶ Activities include regular and summer workshops, festivals, "Thursdays for Children" book readings, tele-classroom courses, concerts, and shows. At

Figure 9: List of Museums in Baja California Sur

Museum	Location	Program Focus
Regional Museum of Anthropology and History (INAH)	La Paz	History of the state from pre-Columbian times to the first decades of the 20 th Century.
Natural History Museum (UABCS)	La Paz	Geology, paleo-botany local wildlife, plus an exhibit on paleo-anthropology containing replicas of skulls of hominids.
Regional Museum of Telecommunications	La Paz	Communication, radio and television devices from 1929 to the present day.
Music Museum	El Triunfo	History of music in Baja California Sur. Housed in a renovated 19 th century building with musical objects and instruments that belonged to famous musicians.
Community Whale Museum	La Paz	57 works of art; also contains the conserved skeletons of a gray whale and a fin-back whale, the only one in Mexico.
Museum of Jesuit Missions (INAH)	Loreto	History of Jesuit-built missions in Californian territory in the 17 th and 18 th centuries.
Unit of INAH services	Mulegé	Mining history of Santa Rosalía located in the former Boleo mining headquarters.
Museum on cave painting (INAH)	San Francisco de la Sierra	Samples of cave art of the Sierra de San Francisco and information about the sierra region.
Museum of the Californias	Cabo San Lucas	History of pre-Columbian and mission times, with artifacts from the Cape region.
Community Museum	Todos Santos	History of pre-Columbian, mission, and revolution eras for Todos Santos.

the state Culture House in Baja California Sur, over 15,000 people took advantage of these programs during 2003.⁷

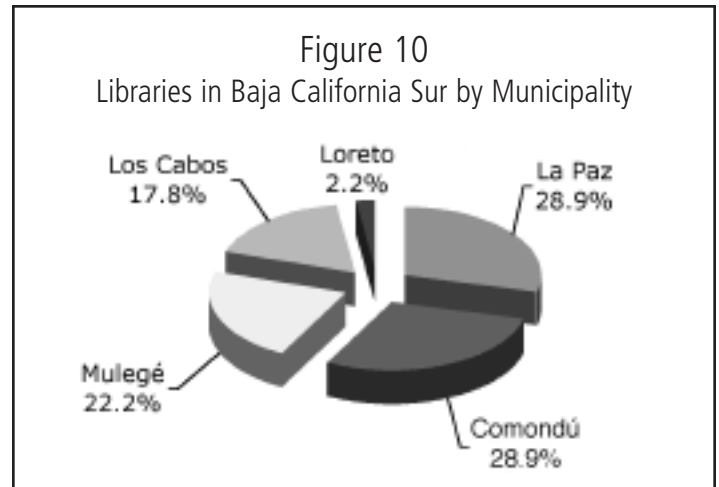
Baja California Sur has 18 cultural houses and is considered one of the best-equipped states in Mexico. The municipal distribution is as follows: La Paz (6), Los Cabos (4), Loreto (1), Mulegé (5), and Comondú (2). However, most of them do not have sufficient financial resources to provide quality cultural services. Increases in wages and training might provide incentives for qualified artists to bring their talents to the staff.

2. Libraries

The total number of libraries in Baja California Sur is 51, holding a total of 413,649 books. These libraries, including Baja California Sur's central library, were initially given 10,000 volumes in 1988.⁸ One library was founded in each state capital city in Mexico; "Filemon C. Pineda," is the main library in La Paz. Of the 6,610 libraries in the Public Library National Network,⁹ 45 are in Baja California Sur – 15 in cities and 30 in rural areas.

The state is considered among those with the least number of libraries in the country, together with Quintana Roo (47), Colima (51) and Campeche (53).¹⁰ If we take into account the number of inhabitants per library of the best and worst equipped states, Baja California Sur is in the middle – Baja California Sur has 10,096 inhabitants per library, while Baja California has almost 30,000 residents per library. Library coverage is limited to urban areas; many rural communities do not even have access to any existing library. Furthermore, existence of a library does not predict quality or quantity of its holdings. Finally, most public schools do not have a library, placing further stress on an inadequate system.

Interestingly, in 2003, there was a drop in the total number of books taken out from the state's public libraries, both in the general and the children's collection compared to 2002. It is encouraging that a new library in Comondú opened in 2003; in fact, the number of users in Comondú surpassed those reported in the same period in Los Cabos, the second most populous municipality in the state.



Most activities to promote reading are targeted toward children, thanks to the coordinated efforts of primary and secondary school teachers during holidays and the Centers of Basic Education. The Special Fund to Promote Reading in Baja California Sur – with an annual budget of MX\$100,000 – carried the first module in February 2004 to train reading hall coordinators. Twenty-six reading hall projects in DIF social development centers were approved for various neighborhoods in La Paz. There has been no evaluation about the population that has benefited from these reading halls.¹¹

The least number of activities to promote reading is among

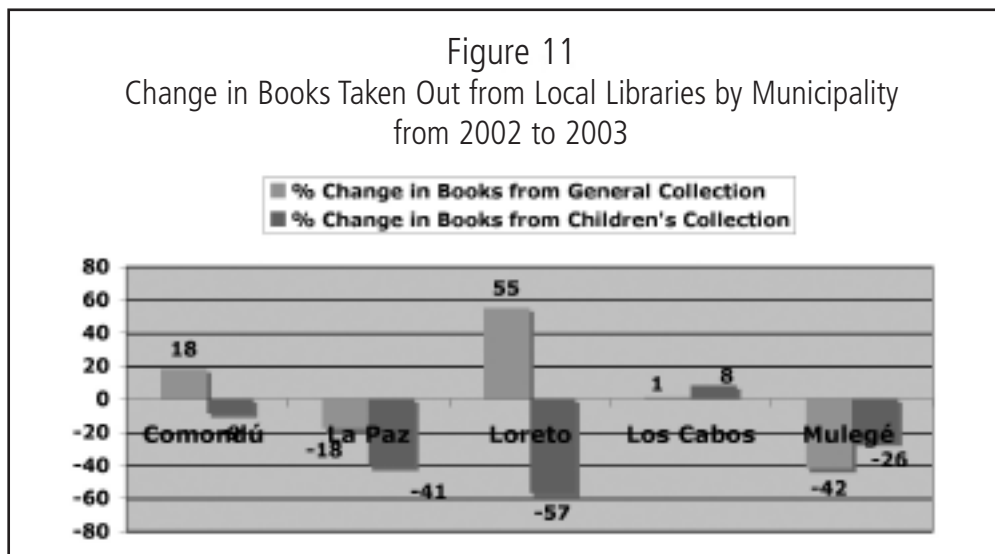


Figure 12: Theaters in Baja California Sur in 2003

Name	Location	Performances	Other Notes
Teatro de la Cuidad	La Paz	174	
Teatro Juarez	La Paz	No regular performances	Recently renovated
Teatro-Auditorio Ricardo Chato Covarrubias	Comondú	No regular performances	
Teatro General Manuel Marques de León	Todos Santos	No regular performances	
Profra. Rosaura Zapata Cano Outdoor Theater	La Paz	No regular performances	
Teatro Prof. Manuel Torre Iglesias	La Paz	No regular performances	
Teatro de la Casa de la Cultura	Los Cabos	No regular performances	Folkloric dance

young people, although the new internet services are targeted toward this audience. Most libraries in the national network do not have computers with access to the Internet. In 2001, Baja California Sur's central library was given equipment for five Internet computing stations. In 2002, only 522 users were able to use the service because of a problem with the central server. In 2003, there were 1,519 users, and at the beginning of 2004 another fifteen computers were added.¹²

During the second stage of the program in early 2004, Cabo San Lucas' libraries were given three computer stations, San Jose del Cabo's was given six and Ciudad Constitucion's received three.¹³ It would be beneficial to assess the impact of this service. Unfortunately, the program to improve this infrastructure has been postponed because of a lack of resources.

Public and private resources supplement the public library system. Higher education institutions in the state have libraries, research centers, and bibliographic collections, including the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur (UABCS), the Technological Institute of La Paz (ITLP), the Center of Biological Research of the Northeast (CIBNOR), the Interdisciplinary Center of Marine Science (CICIMAR), the Urban Teachers' School, and the Higher Teachers' School of the State of Baja California Sur.

Commercial and nonprofit bookstores are also good sources for reading, yet good information on bookstores is limited. The national Cultural Information System shows 1,146 bookstores across Mexico, of which just eight are in Baja California Sur. These eight shops serve three municipalities and over 80% of the state's population. Furthermore, purchasing books is expensive and the bookstores often have low inventory for popular titles.

Assuring adequate library facilities and reference materials should be a priority in the coming years. Aging buildings are still in use with the same space originally designated, while the need for additional children's rooms and programming is growing. Book scholarships for students to help with

textbook expenses will encourage further study; affordable bookstores throughout the state would also help achieve that goal.

3. Drama and Theater

Baja California Sur has seven theater houses, while Baja California has 21. Of these, only three have the minimum equipment for performances and three are outdoor theaters.

Although facilities for cultural events are available when financing is in place, public interest in theater is lacking. Drama productions are generally quite expensive to execute, and there are few educational opportunities for promising actors, directors, or stage staff. Public financing is rarely available, and is not sufficient to address those needs. The presence and concentration of most theater groups in La Paz, combined with high production costs, have restricted drama performances to that city alone, further reducing the potential audience for theater.

In Baja California Sur, there are several theater groups: Altaira, the IMSS theater workshop, La Hostería, A Camanchi, Cóndor, La Prisa de Cronos, the Traveling Theater (Teatro Itinerante), Colectivo Chunique, and La Raza. Each of these is made up of ten to twenty people, mostly teenagers and young people. The number of participants varies depending on the time of school year because most participants are students. Educational institutions that host theater groups are UABCS, la Preparatoria Morelos (Morelos Senior High School), and Baja California Sur's Escuela Normal Superior.

The Baja California Sur Institute of Culture (ISC) maintains a roster of drama professionals, as well as musicians. There are 27 individuals who are dedicated to the theater and 63 musicians that have registered with ISC for performances, most of whom are concentrated in the city of La Paz.¹⁴ In 2002, the ISC organized the State Theater Show, the Region's Theater festival and the State's Theater Competition, with the participation of 11 companies in the

city La Paz. The ISC later arranged training courses for cultural promoters and actors to improve coordination and institutional organization.

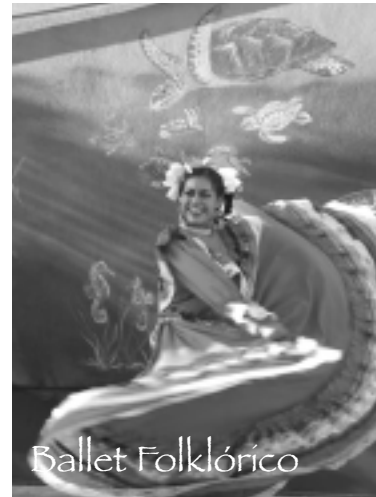
4. Music

In Baja California Sur, the State School of Music offers workshops on music appreciation, and formal courses in guitar, piano, double bass, trumpet, drums, French horn, violin, electronic bass, and viola. In early 2003, 441 students enrolled, but by the end of the year, there were only 214 active students. The State School of Music is also the seat of the Baja California Sur Youth Orchestra, which after just three years in operation, was classified by the National System for the Promotion of Music as the orchestra with the greatest growth in number of performances in 2003. This resulted in nine children being chosen to be part of the National Children and Youth Orchestra. Baja California Sur Youth Orchestra tours throughout the state giving concerts.

Unfortunately, resource challenges are pervasive in music education. For instance, there is no formal musical education in rural communities, due to a dearth of promoters, local art education centers, or cultural bureaus. Likewise, despite its success, it has been difficult to keep up the activities of the Baja California Sur Youth Orchestra, due to high expenses for this and other classical music projects around the state. Furthermore, customs procedures have hindered donations and purchases of musical instruments,

directly affecting both the development of the orchestra, as well as the diffusion of interest in classical music.

The ISC yearbook does not keep good records for musicians and actors outside of the city of La Paz. The lack of data about musicians in the municipality of Loreto is remarkable, since this community has a strong tradition of musical performance, especially of *ranchera* music. It is also difficult to engage musicians for ISC performances because many musicians perform at bars and restaurants, which is more lucrative.



5. Dance

Dance is becoming more popular in Baja California Sur, especially folkloric dance, both as regional dance and as a national symbol. Among the most important dances, and as evidence of the cultural wealth of the state, are “*la Danza de los Cañeros*” and “*La Flor de la Pitahaya*.” Folkloric dancing is usually taught in elementary schools as part of school festivals. Upper grades have more intensive dance training workshops, including most senior high schools and higher education institutions in the state.

The other dancing genres that are taught in the state are ballet, modern, Polynesian, Hawaiian, Spanish, and Arab. These dance forms are mainly taught in private schools, and are neither free nor open to the public; the same is true regarding their performances.

6. Art

Mexico has 570 public art galleries, of which 12 are in Baja California Sur and 34 in Baja California. However, it is possible to visit more than 12 art galleries in Todos Santos alone, for both art exhibits and purchase of artwork by Mexican and foreign artists. According to experts and art

Figure 13:
Cultural Festivals in
Baja California Sur in 2003

Name	# Attendees
Festival Amar la Danza (Dance)	1,709
Festival del Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead)	3,000
Festival de la ballena gris (Gray whale)	2,128
Concert by the B.C.S. Orchestra	2,000
Festival of San Jose del Cabo	1,000
Festival for the founding of La Paz	6,000
Art Festival of Todos Santos	1,700
Whale Festival (Puerto Lopez Mateos)	1,500
XXIV Anniversary of AHPLM	350
Presentation of the National Dance Company	1,062
TOTAL	20,449

Source : Instituto Sudcaliforniano de la Cultura



culture events, including patron saint festivities. To a large extent, this situation is due to the monopoly held by large beverage corporations, which organize and sponsor traditional dances and festivities.

7. Prehistoric Rock Art

Among Baja California Sur's most important cultural assets are the various sites of historic and cultural significance, in particular the prehistoric rock art found throughout the State. This important cultural heritage can be promoted sustainably for the benefit of local communities across Baja California Sur. The most noteworthy site is Sierra de San Francisco in the Municipality of Mulegé which was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994 and constitutes one of the largest concentrations of rock art on earth. Its worth noting that Sierra de San Francisco is considered one of the five most important such sites in the world.

and culture promoters, art education for children and young people, as well as their parents, would add tremendously to art appreciation in the state.

"Mtro. Carlos Olachea" Gallery in La Paz is dedicated to younger, less experienced artists, as well as state and national artists, with exhibits that range from cartoons to conceptual art. In 2003, there were 79 shows; three were collective and the rest were individual shows. There are four other public galleries in La Paz.

Public art had not been promoted by the state government prior to the recent pier beautification program in La Paz city. This project included placing several sculptures along the Paseo Alvaro Obregón. In August 2005, Wyland, an internationally-recognized artist, painted a marine mural on the tax bureau (*Hacienda*) building, which is visible from most vantage points along the *malecón* in La Paz. Aside from the fact that these sculpture and mural projects are important for promoting public art, local artists have not welcomed it. They are not pleased with priority for artists outside the region or the selection process.¹⁶

Providing income for professionals in the creative arts is a key element to a vibrant arts scene. For example, linking art to health and environmental educational programs has not been sufficiently explored. Poster contests, photo exhibits, and public murals are all examples of public campaigns that could benefit artists and promote awareness of these issues. "Artist-in-residence" programs could also provide scholarships and revenue.

Public art is usually present in festivals, founding celebrations, carnivals, and patron saint festivities. Art festivals in Todos Santos and Los Barriles draw both tourists and residents, providing an income stream for local artists. Also common in these events are outdoor presentations of art pieces, different genres of music, folkloric, and other dance groups, including Hawaiian, Polynesian, or Tahitian. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is often linked with folk

At Sierra de San Francisco, there is a management plan in place which not only protects the painted sites but the environment as well. The local population participates as guides, outfitters, service providers, custodians and the first and most effective line of defense for this fragile artistic manifestation because they have seen a direct, personal economic benefit in this sustainable activity. An added value to this has been to reduce the economic dependence on large herds of goats (for the production of cheese) that severely overgrazed and eroded the landscape until recently. This model of sustainable development and management is being replicated in the Sierra de Guadalupe further south.¹⁷



Photo: Miguel Ángel de la Cueva / www.planetapeninsula.org (R)

Ranchero at Home

8. Artesanía and Crafts

Baja California Sur has no handicraft traditions that may be defined as native. However, there is a deeply rooted craft tradition originating from ranch owners in Baja California Sur. The ranch culture absorbed both Western forms of

Figure 14: Funded projects that contributed to the Route of the Missions

Year	Project	Expected product	Amount (pesos/USD)
2000	Baja California Sur en concierto	Four piano concerts in four . different missions	\$24,000/ US\$2,270
	Internet site of the Missions in Baja California Sur ²¹	A web page with historic information, photographs.	\$25,000/ US\$2,365
2001	Audio book for children telling the story of the missions.	Publication of CDs telling stories about the missions; 1,000 copies	\$55,000/ US\$5,203
	Book in Braille about the history of the missions for for children	Publication of 1,000 copies of the book in the Braille system.	\$45,000/ US\$4,257
2002	“Testamentos del Sol” [Testament of the Sun]	Poetry book, including 45 poems about the rebellion of Californians in the year 1743.	\$37,200/ US\$3,519
	“Una Mirada a Baja California Sur” [A view of Baja California Sur]	Internet Multimedia page including photographs, historic data and reports of history publications. It includes a map of the Route of the Missions	\$37,000/ US\$3,500
	Internet page with cartoons about the Missions	Interactive page in Internet about the missions in Baja California Sur, for children, including historic data, photographs, and cartoons.	\$37,000/ US\$3,500
2003	Stories about Baja California Sur	Three stories about Baja California Sur in different times.	\$30,000/ US\$2,838
	Esthetic and historical analysis of buildings in La Paz and proposals for their restoration and use.	Ten paintings in watercolor and acrylic with images of the buildings eligible for restoration	\$30,000/ US\$2,838
	“Ruta de las Misiones: laberinto del tiempo” [Route of the Missions: Time labyrinth]	A CD documentary including historical and graphic information about the missions of Baja California Sur.	\$30,000/ US\$2,838

Source: Instituto Sudcaliforniano de la Cultura

Challenges for the Route of the Missions Program are mainly financial; the annual budget is not enough to implement restoration and cultural projects in and around the historic mission sites. The loss of some historic monuments has, regrettably, already occurred. The main goals of the program include the restoration of mission architectural complexes and works of art that date back to the seventeenth century.

subsistence, as well as the lifestyles and ways of the ancient people of Baja California Sur. This synthesis resulted in residents' use of resources provided by the environment. They created leather pieces, wicker works (mainly palm), rudimentary pottery, and the use of regional woods (*palo de arco, choya, pitaya, cardon, palo fierro, palo adan, palma*, etc.). To make the best use of available materials and to decrease waste, other elements were added: bovine bones and horns, remains of animal hide, stones, sand, coral, conch shell, abalone, clams and mother of pearl.

Currently, the state government and several civil organizations are in charge of dissemination, preservation,

and recovery of crafts. There are other programs that encourage crafts manufacturing as an alternative economic activity, mainly in remote communities. Training courses in manufacturing techniques and marketing encourage *artesanía* as a feasible means of community development.¹⁸ This statewide program has a registry of 451 craftsmen.

In 2003, the Association of Baja California Sur Craftsmen and the state government created the House of the Baja California Sur Craftsmen, whose role is to bring products closer to potential consumers. By July 2004, this marketing house had received items from 220 craftsmen from all five

municipalities, including 20 inmates of the center of social re-adaptation in the city of La Paz and Ciudad Constitución. In that one month alone, a total of 2,256 items were sold.

9. The Route of Missions

The Jesuits founded 15 missions along the coast in Baja California Sur. Each mission consisted of churches, chapels, and other buildings where clergymen and lay people lived. This system of architectural complexes is one of the main cultural icons in the state. The first mission was Nuestra Señora de Loreto Concho, founded in 1697 by Father Juan María de Salvatierra.¹⁹ Accordingly, Loreto is considered to be the municipality with the most important historical heritage in the state.

Missions established in the Californias generated a set of economic and cultural activities that need to be cataloged and restored. Archeological sites, handwritten documents, paintings, sculptures, original plans, crafts, fruits, and vegetables growth, livestock ranch exploitation, as well as an intangible heritage including beliefs, oral traditions, and religious festivities are just some of the important legacies of the missions' history in the state.²⁰



Two main institutions safeguard this cultural heritage: the Coordinating Office of the State Program Route of the Missions (CPERM) and INAH, both federal institutions. Together with the Secretary for Tourism, these agencies are promoting tourism to architectural and cultural sites in the old Jesuit missions, and creating a corridor called the "Route of the Missions." This route also corresponds to historic districts in Loreto, El Triunfo, and San Javier that contain important buildings and plazas from that era that

also contain important examples of sculpture and artwork.

Needs by Municipality

1. La Paz

Some of the challenges for the La Paz municipality have been mentioned above, but probably the main challenge is to disseminate the cultural life of La Paz beyond its boundaries, using traveling exhibits; culturally-focused radio and television shows; art, music, and dance appreciation courses; and training for art and music teachers in rural areas. In addition, there is a need to better utilize existing facilities – cultural centers, theaters, school buildings, and libraries – to hold cultural events, art exhibits, community theater, and festivals. Affordable and regular performances for the general public will increase the audience, which is currently lacking interest.

The community also needs programming and facilities targeted to children and young people. Increased internet access in public facilities, environmental education centers, interactive exhibits, and an arts/drama school, would bring talented professionals to the region.

Because La Paz is the state capital and it has the highest number of performers and artisans, a proposed State Council for Culture and the Arts should be located there. Not only would the council focus on cultural promotion and marketing performances, but it could also help achieve better communication and coordination between government agencies, nonprofit groups, and schools to pool available funding, facilities, training opportunities, and materials. The council could also focus on statewide programs, such as the Route of the Missions, the restoration of the Library of the Californias, and the House of Baja California Sur Craftsmen.

2. Loreto

Loreto suffers from a lack of available facilities. The town has only one library for the entire municipality, one museum/cultural center, and no theaters. Yet, Loreto has the most recognized historical and cultural heritage among the five municipalities in Baja California Sur.

Libraries in outlying areas should be prioritized, with targeted materials for children and young people, including internet and computers. Training for art, music, ceramics, theater, and dance teachers in the schools could provide after-school activities, as well as possible professional career tracks.

The architectural and historical buildings, artwork, and

adjacent archaeological sites need to be restored and conserved. San Javier's mission, the *Cuevas Pintas* (cave painting) sites, and the Jesuit missionary Juan de Ugarte have been identified as priorities. In addition, altarpieces, historical archives, and artwork should be restored.

Oral history and folk tales are a dying tradition in Loreto and should be kept alive through recordings and catalogs. The *ranchera* traditions that meld ancient California with the West need to be preserved, including their unique music.

3. Los Cabos

Despite the relative wealth of Los Cabos, the residential community is relatively migratory and does not invest in local cultural activities or facilities. Civil society groups have not emerged in the municipality to promote or create festivals, public art projects, drama or dance productions, or concerts. Nevertheless, there is a growing need to provide children and young people with opportunities for recreation and leisure to counteract the lure of drugs, alcohol, and television.

Existing facilities need to be upgraded. The Cabo San Lucas Culture House is a focal point for potential activities, but it needs substantial renovation. The roof leaks and the space is not designed well for giving classes or large groups. Theater and dance workshops; a puppet theater; and an audiovisual hall for films, video, and documentaries are several ideas for redesigning the Culture House. The San José del Cabo library needs internet services.

New facilities should also be considered. Culture houses for Miraflores and Santiago are needed, with

programming, infrastructure, and trained staff. An arts school for Los Cabos, along with a theater house or open-air amphitheatre for performances, would enhance the cultural opportunities for local residents. Reading rooms for rural areas and low-income communities would bring small-scale libraries to these eager audiences.

Funding should be allocated to support the existing artistic community. Scholarships for emerging artists, art education programs in schools, and research on the missions are several opportunities for preserving artistic and cultural heritage, as well as encouraging new appreciation and talent.

4. Mulegé

Santa Rosalía is a target for cultural preservation because of its unique architecture and history. Oral history, additional historical research, and published information would be important additions to protecting the legacy of this interesting city. In addition, a trust fund to reconstruct and rehabilitate buildings that have historical value should be established, both those that belong to the mission complex and those in the mines historical zone.

Guerrero Negro's temperate climate, which prevails most of the year, is prohibitive for outdoor festivals, recreational events, and theater. The city needs indoor venues, where cultural and sports events could take place, which would help provide activities for youth and families.

Art education is needed throughout the municipality, including trained school teachers, materials, and dedicated facilities. A cultural center with art courses and workshops, an audiovisual hall, and a theater house would augment the school-based program.

