

FINAL REPORT

# Next Generation of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audience Dialogues

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Prepared by:  
D-Code  
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 251  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5V 3A8  
P. 416.599.5400  
F. 416.599.5288  
[www.d-code.com](http://www.d-code.com)

Next Generation  
Dialogues

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

### Overview of Project

The *Next Generation of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audience Dialogues* was a nationwide process undertaken by public arts funders in Canada to assess and engage young Canadians in a discussion about key issues facing artists and arts audiences. The Canada Council for the Arts initiated the project and partnered with provincial and territorial members of the Canadian Public Arts Funders network to support this work.

D-Code was contracted to moderate, facilitate and report on the Dialogues. This project was designed to engage young artists, administrators and arts supporters in a conversation about the arts in Canada and the role of public arts funders in supporting these activities. The emphasis of the consultations focused on areas where knowledge gaps had been identified by a literature review conducted by the Canada Council. It pointed to a variety of topics needing further exploration, such as emerging practices, the role of young artists in communities, professional development and access issues. The Dialogues consisted of two distinct conversations: a series of consultations with young artists and arts professionals on present and future issues along with directions and a series of smaller focus groups with young people interested in supporting the arts.

Between April and June 2007, nine sessions with artists and arts administrators were held in St. John's, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver and Whitehorse. Participants included practicing artists, recent graduates of arts training programs and young arts administrators between the ages of 18 and 30. Participants were selected by the arts funders to reflect diversity in both demographic categories and artistic disciplines. In each session, participants were invited from across the province and territory, and in some cases, different provinces and territories. Participants from Nunavut were invited but were unable to attend due to logistical difficulties. In all, close to 200 took part. Focus group sessions with people aged 18-30 who demonstrated some interest in the arts were held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver. Close to 40 participants attended the focus group sessions.

This project was designed to facilitate a broad discussion of the future of the arts in Canada. As a result, participants were encouraged to discuss issues and needs both within and beyond current arts funder jurisdictions.

For more details on the project, please consult: **Section 2.1 Methodology.**

### What is influencing the Next Generation of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audiences?

Since its inception in 1994, D-Code has conducted a variety of qualitative and quantitative projects exploring the behaviours and attitudes of young Canadians. In recent years, D-Code has explored the importance of life stages and life stage transitions in young populations, in addition to generational attributes. This means looking at the key transformative points of youth from adolescence to independence, and exploring what young people want and seek in those periods. As artists and arts professionals, participants often vocalized anxiety about the early years of their careers, particularly as

they leave school and attempt to build their resumes, but also as they seek financial, professional and mentorship support through arts funders or arts audiences.

The most frequently discussed influence on the lives of those aged 18 to 30 has been that of information and communication technology. The rise of the World Wide Web and E-mail occurred when the oldest members of this segment were in their late teens. Subsequent years have seen on-line technology rapidly diversify as a source of information, communication, entertainment and artistic expression. In the context of these sessions, Information Technology was seen as a major opportunity for artists to connect with each other and with markets and audiences for their work. This was especially important for participants working in rural and isolated communities, many of whom are excited about how Information Technology might enable them to remain in their communities. For some artists and arts organizations, however, getting access to the skills and technical infrastructure needed to leverage these benefits remains a challenge.

Another major influence is diversity, as young Canadians have also grown up in a much more demographically varied environment than previous generations. Despite some common bonds of shared experience, demographic differences in areas such as gender, class, culture, ethno-cultural background, physical ability, and sexual orientation may be driving different attitudes and behaviours in terms of engagement with arts. Participants, particularly Aboriginal and visible minority artists, often noted that they define themselves across demographic identities, and that this multiple identification makes it challenging for them to understand how they should present themselves before institutions.

### **Common Themes of the Next Generation of Artistic Leaders Dialogue Sessions**

The following is a synthesis of the discussions in each session and an identification of common themes. Some of these were themes that were drawn out by the questions in the consultation, and others emerged on their own. Additional themes and issues that were not reflected across the country are detailed in the provincial and territorial reports:

**Access:** Many artists and arts administrators spoke at length about issues related to theme of access. Many noted that arts practitioners have always faced difficulties in the earlier stages in their careers, and that for people of their generation, this fact was no different. Many participants, however, said they felt the playing field for young Canadian artists and arts organizations is not equal, and that steps could be taken to improve this problem. First, there was a perception that more established arts practices and organizations dominate the cultural landscape, making it difficult for emerging artists and arts practices to access funding streams, mentorship, and technical and social infrastructure. In addition, demographic factors, such as socio-economic status, geographical location, ethno-cultural background, age and linguistic abilities were perceived to create further disparities within their generation, in terms of access to support from funders, opportunities for advancement and long-term sustainability of their arts practices. Awareness of arts funder programs and services was also seen as a key issue for participants. Many artists admitted they learn best from personal contact with program officers at all levels of the application process and that without this contact they are less likely to pursue opportunities that might be available to them.

**Arts Community:** Overall, many artists and arts administrators said they are seeking deeper connections and relationships, not only within their discipline, but across the broader arts community- including other artists, arts professionals, arts funders and arts



audiences. Some participants voiced frustration with the bureaucratic or disengaged nature of their relationship with funders, presenters, mentors and audiences. Participants in the Artistic Leaders Dialogues sessions said they identify strongly with their artistic communities – the networks of friends, supporters, fellow artists and arts organizations that support both their creative work and the infrastructure for developing audiences. For both, community meant not only seeking support, it meant a commitment to supporting the work of others. Many participants reported volunteering significant portions of personal time and resources to support others working both within and beyond their immediate disciplines.

**Professional and Artistic Development:** While few participants were living solely from their artistic practice, they said they strongly identified with artistic creation and administration/ curation as the focus of their career ambitions. As a result, they expressed a need to continually develop their skills and abilities throughout their lives. Young artists and arts professionals were almost unanimous in upholding the importance of continued professional and artistic development and had a broad definition of what kinds of learning would help contribute to their long-term careers.

**Connection to Arts Funders:** Participants had a wide variety of reactions to questions about their connection to and engagement with various levels of arts funders. Some participants, particularly those who had experience with applying for and receiving funding, said they felt a strong connection to a funding body. Some participants made distinctions between their relationships with arts funders, seeing more of a connection to local or regional arts funding bodies than the Canada Council. Still others, however, said they felt they had little or no relationship to an arts funding body and had little understanding of how arts funders could support their work. Participants in the Artistic Leaders Dialogues said that they saw a role for all levels of arts funders in supporting artists and arts organizations to create new works, helping artists secure other forms of funding, building professional and artistic networks, and promoting the contributions that artists make to Canadian social, cultural, and economic life to the broader Canadian society.

**Role of Arts in Canadian Society:** Many participants are worried about what they perceive as the diminishing value that Canadian society places on the arts, as evidenced by declining support to arts and education. Many young artists believe that more needs to be done to demonstrate how non-commercial arts practices and organizations contribute to the overall fabric of Canadian society. Others, however, said that the confrontational and challenging aspect of many arts practices also needs to be valued. In particular, participants noted the role that many artists play in advocating social change and contributing to social development and participants felt that this function needs greater recognition within Canadian society.

**The Draw of Major Urban Centres:** Many participants feel the need to move to large urban areas, such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto in order to pursue opportunities for new audiences, new peer groups, career development, and international gateways for their work. Many participants, however, feel conflicted about this view, and believe strongly in the importance of developing sustainable arts communities for artists across Canada. Many are hopeful that information technologies will help them sustain their practices in the communities of their choosing, but say they lack the expertise and resources to fully realize this potential.

## Summary of Participant Recommendations

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The following is a summary and synthesis of participant recommendations during discussion and recommendation stages of the consultations. Some of these recommendations were drawn out by the questions in the consultation and others emerged on their own.

### **Access:**

- Participants said they wanted to see more flexibility – not only in terms of the categories of disciplines and practices and eligibility criteria, but also in how they apply for support.
- Participants thought more funds should be devoted towards new and emerging artists, artist-run centres and emerging arts organizations.
- Culturally diverse artists and arts administrators, along with Aboriginals, said that funders need to do a better job understanding their artistic practices and ensure they are assessed through the right programs – particularly for those artists whose work melds traditional forms with new or exploratory forms.

### **Outreach and Information:**

- Increased outreach activities were highly encouraged by participants, particularly in the areas of dissemination about arts funder programming, eligibility and criteria, selection processes, and resources for supporting artists.
- Many participants felt that arts funders need to be more visible in various regions of the country, either by opening more offices, or by conducting more face-to-face outreach with new and emerging artists, especially in rural, remote and isolated communities.
- Many participants felt that the Artistic Leaders sessions were good examples of activities that arts funders should support on a regular basis.

### **Training in the "Business of Art":**

- Small business expertise was considered a key need for emerging artists and participants. Most wanted to see more support for the development of these skills among young and emerging artists.
- Some participants felt this could be achieved by a variety of means, including arts funding streams for entrepreneurship training for practitioners and funding secondments for business service professionals to work with arts organizations.

### **Mentorship and Networking:**

- Participants said they felt arts funders could develop mentorship and networking by creating on-line portals or by devoting more funding streams to these activities within and beyond Canada.
- Participants also felt that funders should mandate that established organizations devote a portion of their resources to mentoring emerging arts organizations or providing them access to space.

**Application and Selection Processes:**

- Arts funders could better educate applicants about how to properly write applications by posting templates or examples of successful applications on their websites or by distributing them during workshops.
- Many participants felt that all levels of arts funders should standardize budget applications for all programming.
- Application deadlines were also highlighted as an issue for participants. Many urged arts funders to create more flexible options for submission deadlines by expanding the number of deadlines for all streams. Others felt that municipal, provincial/ territorial and federal funders should coordinate their deadlines by allowing for sufficient space between different deadlines so that organizations can have enough time to prepare strong applications.
- Many participants wanted more flexibility on application formats and more opportunities for visual or oral submissions.
- Participants wanted to see greater openness on behalf of arts funders in supporting and engaging with emerging artists and organizations.

**Selection/ Peer Assessment Processes:**

- Participants said they need more communication and information about how projects are selected for funding, the regional distribution of funds and how juries are composed.
- Many participants wanted to see more emerging artists take part in juries, and felt they should be able to apply for these opportunities.
- Many participants say they want more feedback on their applications, and recommend that written feedback be required from all juries.

**Eligible Project Funding:**

- Many felt that funders should support the purchase of equipment and/ or investment in capital costs as part of project grants.
- Many participants say their practices are not well suited to the “project” model of funding and would like to see more funding streams that support different aspects of being an artist, such as cost of living and “emergency help” funds.

**New Audiences (Dissemination and Promotion):**

- Many participants said they believe that funders have a role to play in helping artists disseminate their work and in raising the profile and understanding of the arts in general.
- Participants sought assistance and opportunities to present their work nationally and internationally.

**Future Directions**



**Life stages:** Arts funders can build stronger relationships with young arts practitioners by demonstrating, through their programming and support offerings, that they **recognize the differing realities facing the next generation of artistic leaders across different life stages**. This could be achieved by re-thinking some funding criteria. It also might be reflected in the development of different support tools or structures for artists and arts professionals at different stages of their lives.

**Relationships:** Arts funding bodies may need to demonstrate their commitment and involvement in arts communities by **repositioning themselves not only as sources of funding, but also a broad array of support services, including mentorship, research and referral**. To reciprocate, artistic leaders say they are willing to contribute their own advice and expertise to arts funding bodies on a regular basis.

**Entrepreneurial Spirit:** Many participants spoke of **entrepreneurial models when discussing their long-range career** plans. The goal for many participants is to be entirely reliant on income generated through their practices, and support from arts funders is often seen as a “first step” towards these goals. Recognizing this entrepreneurial desire will be an important challenge for many arts funders.

**Multiplicity:** Increasingly arts funders will need to recognize that **arts practitioners are not solely invested in singular aspects of creative practice or sectoral employment**. Many participants have multi-disciplinary orientations, and work many different types of jobs to support their creative work. This is of particular relevance when discussing categorization of practice, eligibility criteria and assessment of artistic achievement with arts funding bodies.

### Key Themes from Focus Group sessions

The following is a synthesis of responses to issues raised through the Focus Group sessions. Participant responses were generated using a series of questions developed by D-Code and an Advisory Committee of representatives from arts funding bodies.

**Value of the Arts:** Participants in the Focus Group sessions believed that the arts are essential to their community’s identity. Participants also believed that the arts play a role in retaining and drawing people to their communities and in contributing to overall quality of life. Most participants felt that arts and education needs more support in the schools and are concerned about what they perceive as a lack of emphasis on arts education for young children.

**Connection Between Social and Artistic Experiences:** Many participants considered certain arts experiences (e.g., going to private art galleries or orchestral concerts) intimidating or alienating because participants felt that they needed to have a certain type of education to understand them. Few participants, however, expressed an interest in understanding or participating in these kinds of experiences, unless there was a personal or social connection to the works. Participants were generally more likely to attend (and feel comfortable at) arts experiences with a strong community context, such as public arts festivals or large popular music concerts. Many see these kinds of arts experiences as social events they can share with their friends and opportunities to feel a “community spirit”.

**Role of Government in Supporting Arts:** Most participants said they saw a role for government in the arts, not only in supporting the arts through funding, but through promoting the benefits of the arts and ensuring that the arts remain part of the education system. When

weighed against other needs (social services, recreation, lower taxes, health care), some participants believed that the arts are less of a priority for funding. Many participants said they felt that government should be supporting Canadian artists and arts organizations in finding larger international audiences, thereby contributing to how the world sees Canada.

### **Comparison of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audiences**

Artistic leaders and arts audiences valued the importance of the arts for quality of life, economic development and education. Artistic leaders and arts audiences were worried about the declining support for art in childhood education and supported measures to increase arts spending in education. Both artistic leaders and arts audiences valued arts experiences that present multiple works across multiple disciplines under common umbrellas.

Some artistic leaders and most arts audiences said that some contemporary arts experiences are poorly understood and perceived as alienating by many in the arts audience. Some artistic leaders are worried about diluting artistic practices as a way of increasing an audience for the arts. Most arts audiences did not discuss artistic experiences in ways that demonstrated they distinguish between commercial and non-commercial forms of artistic expression.



## 2.0 NEXT GENERATION OF ARTISTIC LEADERS DIALOGUES

### 1) METHODOLOGY

#### a. Overview of Objectives

This project was designed to achieve the following objective:

- To ask young artists and arts administrators, aged 18 to 30 years old, to help define present and future issues for arts funding programs and policies

#### b. Recruitment and Attendance

**Artistic Leaders Dialogues:** Participants for the Next Generation of Artistic Leaders Dialogues were selected by the co-hosting arts funders for each session. Target group size was between 20 to 30 participants with a cross-country average of 20 participants.

Each partner proposed a long list of candidates culled from records of grant applicants, community contacts, suggestions from arts organizations, service organizations and schools. Participants were selected for a shortlist to achieve balanced representation on the following criteria:

- Age range (18-30 years)
- Gender
- Practicing artists, arts administrators and curators/presenters in any traditional or contemporary discipline or art practice
- Students in their final years and recent graduates of arts training programs
- Those receiving funding
- Those not receiving funding, but who would be eligible
- Representatives of Aboriginal people (First Nation, Inuit or Métis)
- Representatives of culturally diverse communities
- Representatives of official language minorities
- Representatives from rural and urban areas
- Representatives from different provinces/territories in joint sessions (Halifax/Whitehorse)

Final participation levels and representational balance were dependent on participant availability.

Simultaneous interpretation and bilingual facilitation were offered at the sessions in Toronto, Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Montreal and official language minority representatives were also present in those sessions.

**c. Approach**

The overall approach to consultations was developed by D-Code and overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the Canada Council for the Arts (including the Canadian Commission for UNESCO) and provincial and territorial funding agencies. Municipal arts funders participated in the sessions in Manitoba and B.C. In addition, a Youth Advisory Committee, comprised of potential participants in the Artistic Leaders Dialogue sessions, provided input on the topics to be covered in the sessions and how to best facilitate these discussions.

A review of selected literature was conducted to provide a snapshot of some of the key findings regarding trends and issues related to the next generation of Canadian artists and arts professionals. This review demonstrated that significant studies had been done on issues related to emerging arts administrators and the impact of new technologies and digital culture on artists and young people. Thus, the emphasis of the consultations focused on areas where knowledge gaps had been identified, such as emerging practices, the role of young artists in communities, professional development and access issues.

The consultations had five sections and lasted approximately five hours. Each session had the following key elements.

- 1) *Introduction and Object Exercise (1 hour)*: Before the sessions, participants were asked to bring an object that inspired them in their work. After introductory remarks from D-Code facilitators and senior arts funder representatives, each participant was invited to speak briefly about the object they had brought. This allowed participants to quickly introduce themselves before the larger group, while talking in detail about what motivates their work.
- 2) *Now and Future Small Group Exercises (1.5 hours)*: Participants were then divided into smaller groups of between five and 10 people. In Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Halifax and Montreal, one group was designated as bilingual for minority Francophone or Anglophone participants.

In this section of the consultation, participants were asked to describe their current realities in terms of the following issues:

- self sufficiency as an artist or arts professional
- respect and recognition from arts communities as a whole
- reaching new audiences
- connection to and support from arts funders

D-Code facilitators prompted the discussion by using the following issues to guide participants in defining their current reality: mentorship, creative

development, technology, tradition, funding process, accessibility, language, arts institutions, accountability and excellence.

Once participants had articulated a current reality, they were then asked to define their future goals under each of the issues. Participants were encouraged to articulate what their needs were to help them reach these goals.

- 3) *Discussion: Role of Arts in the Community (45 minutes):* Participants reconvened within the larger group for a plenary discussion on the role of arts in the community. D-Code facilitators posed the questions before the larger group and participants were invited to provide comment individually. Key questions raised included:
  - How do the arts play a role in your communities? Do they play a role in making your communities better?
  - What kind of impact should artists have in their communities, and what kind of impact do they have now?
  - Where do the roles and responsibilities of artists and administrators lie in facilitating this?
- 4) *Supporting the Artist Small Group Exercises: (1 hour):* Participants returned to the small group sessions to revisit topics raised in the *Now and Future* exercise and suggest specific or broad solutions to address the key issues. Emphasis was placed on solutions that participants thought could be offered by arts funders. Participants in each group were then asked to vote for their “top three” ideas to get a sense of how these solutions should be prioritized. The sessions wrapped up with facilitators providing an overview of the top ideas as voted on by participants.

*Note: This project was designed to allow young artistic leaders to participate in a broad discussion of the future of arts in Canada. Participants were encouraged to speak about issues and needs that were most relevant to their practices. As a result, participants discussed topics both within and beyond the current mandates of arts funders.*



### 3.0 COMMON TRENDS

#### 1) Overview of the Next Generation Artists and Arts Administrators

##### a. Self-definition

In the introduction and object exercise, participants were given an opportunity to introduce themselves and define their practices. Many participants self-identified as practitioners within a single, defined artistic discipline, using terms such as “dancer,” “musician,” “writer,” “sculptor” or “filmmaker.” Those with salary positions as artist/performer or administrator usually identified the companies they work for. Some participants noted that the issue of self-identification was critical to their practice, particularly those who were members of artist unions or professional organizations. Many said they see the benefits of joining and organizing as artists, but others feel that the membership and designation within these types of organizations serves to limit them, not only in terms of how they self-identify, but also what contexts they are allowed to work in. Those who are not part of official organizations often said they feel ghettoized by the arts community and society as a whole, and struggle to fully feel valued and respected as artists.

Others, however, described their practices in terms of the materials and processes they used, as opposed to a strict discipline. Several participants said they felt uncomfortable defining their practice because their work was more about conveying or discussing ideas than any particular craft or discipline. While few of these participants identify as multi-disciplinary artists per se, there was a sense that for some young artists, the boundaries of specific practices and disciplines were less important in how they describe their work.

As emerging artists and arts professionals, many participants said they struggle to feel that the institutions and audiences they want to interact with treat them as professionals. For some, “professionalism” was seen as a label imposed by others, bringing the benefit of increased access to arts funding and better opportunities to present or publish work. Some participants noted that funders require a certain number of professional presentations of their work as eligibility criteria and that this is a barrier to accessing funding for emerging artists. Others said they felt they had to apply more than once before they would be successfully considered for a grant.

For some participants, cultural, socio-economic, geographical and sexual identity was integral to how they defined themselves and their practices. Many artists felt it was important to incorporate these personal and community identities in their overall perceptions of their work. This was especially true of participants from rural and isolated communities, and of Aboriginal, new Canadian and culturally diverse backgrounds.

##### b. Many looking for initial help/ tools to become self-sustaining

Almost all participants said they are looking for ways to become more self-sustaining through their practices and less dependent on support from government grants or foundations. Even among participants currently employed as performers or professionals within arts organizations, many said they would like to work as

*“You really need to feel like you are in a strong network to feel professional, because it’s hard to feel like you are an artist in general society.”  
Saskatchewan Session*

independent creators at some point in their careers. Many hoped that their practices could become modestly successful small businesses, and that, as a result, they were keen to gain expertise in promotion, marketing, advertising, dissemination and bookkeeping. In addition, participants recognized that the emergence of on-line marketplaces offers many participants – particularly those in rural and isolated communities that work in the production of sellable work – opportunities to seek new audiences and markets for their art.

Many participants said they are concerned about larger social safety and security issues. It was noted that some governments are pursuing “status of artist” legislation to promote the social, cultural and economic value of the arts and allow artist organizations to negotiate agreements with government institutions. Others hoped that these kinds of legislative initiatives would lead to a special taxation designation for artists. For many participants, long term issues such as access to health insurance and worries about small or non-existent pensions are very important. From an organizational standpoint, many participants spoke about their worries that current organizational structures, (such as non-profit, board-based organizations) are not supporting new forms, emerging artists and community arts. Several participants also noted emerging arts organizations struggle to get charitable status, and thus face many barriers in fundraising.

Some participants, however, said that economic sustainability is less important to them than having access to funding to create their work. For some, this funding is needed to provide the technical and logistical support that enables their projects to work. For others, particularly those in performing arts or visual arts, funding is needed to rent space to rehearse or create works. For others, such as writers, funding is needed to support living expenses incurred during the process of creation. Many participants felt that their practices are not commercially sustainable, and, as a result, will always need to rely on some sort of external funding. Among many participants, there was recognition that government arts funders need not be the only source of this support. Some participants are open to exploring options for fundraising from their communities, seeking contributions from corporate sponsors or foundations, or lobbying for changes to tax laws for artists as a way of financially supporting their lives, their organizations and the artists they work with.

c. Working multiple jobs/ volunteering their time to contribute to their communities

Very few participants said they survived from creative activities. Some artists said they felt fortunate to have found paying freelance work in jobs that are related to their field, such as arts instruction, arts administration or providing technical and logistical support to other artists or productions. Despite the benefits of working with artists, however, many say working in the arts sector not only puts enormous strain on them financially, but also takes away from time they want to be spending on their own work. Many felt that working in the arts sector can be particularly taxing because of long hours and low pay. Most arts administrators agreed with this assertion, adding that they worried about their ability to work in the arts sector throughout their careers. A small number of participants said they worked in fields completely unrelated to the arts sector as a means of supporting themselves.

Despite these pressures, many artists feel a strong loyalty to other artists and to their local communities as a whole. In addition to working long hours to support

*"We need to have a greater sense of responsibility – not just say the [arts funders] will take all of this and change. Some of this we can do ourselves." -- Newfoundland & Labrador session*

*"It's important that we discussed the issue of being self-sustaining and not just getting funding." -- Northern Session*

*« Les artistes ont une responsabilité d'investir localement – acheter, connecter avec la communauté. » -- Quebec session*

themselves, many volunteer time and expertise to other artists and arts organizations as a way of supporting their local arts scenes. Others volunteer time and effort directly in their communities, contributing their artistic expertise to activities that demonstrate the social value of the arts. Many felt strongly about the importance of showing the value of art to others around them, especially children. Some participants, however, said that they were increasingly less likely to volunteer in the community. Some feared the perception that emerging artists are always willing to work for free, a perception which was seen to be damaging to their long-term careers and to the long-term sustainability of artistic infrastructure.

d. Eager to meet and work with other artists in Canada and internationally

Many participants have a strong desire to connect and collaborate with other artists beyond their immediate communities. For some, this was important because they wanted to connect with others practicing in similar disciplines. For others, this desire is rooted in a need to establish a sense of identity both to themselves and to the world around them. This is of particular interest to non-urban, Aboriginal, Northern artists and artists living within minority communities throughout the country. Many participants believed strongly in the value of travel, residencies outside their communities and in on-line collaboration and networking.

e. Emphasize personal development and learning in both creative and practical skills

Many artist participants expected to be practicing some form of expression throughout their lives, and felt strongly that their work will benefit from the learning opportunities they seek out. Participants are eager to find mentorship opportunities, workshop with established artists and invest in specific skills upgrades that are relevant to their practices. Others, particularly those working in practices that require technical expertise, said that skills development, especially awareness and understanding of new technology, is essential to their work. Finding financial support for learning was therefore seen as vital to many participants.

Some participants also spoke about concerns they have as students. Some participants lamented the lack of consistency and standardization in arts training, particularly in regards to accreditation, making it difficult to demonstrate expertise before arts funders and secure employment in arts instruction or administration.



f. Worried about the perceived dwindling appreciation of arts in Canada

Many participants were concerned that support for the arts and for public funding of the arts is on the decline in Canada. They attributed this perception to declining arts education for young children in schools. There is a widespread fear that young people today are not being exposed to artistic education and criticism at a young age, and that today's artists, arts organizations and arts funders have a unique and urgent role in the dissemination and promotion of artistic experiences. Some participants noted that people in their own generation are some of the most difficult people to attract and engage as audiences. Many attribute this to a perceived increase in competition from other diversions such as on-line culture, pop culture and television.

Some participants also spoke about the apparent decline of media coverage of the arts. This was important to participants, not only in terms of attracting public consumption and attendance of the arts, but also in terms of critical dissemination and exploration of artistic practices.

*"We've lost the support of our audiences. Where did it go? Why? How can we bring it back?" – Newfoundland & Labrador session*

*"It's good we're talking about this because it is important to create art that speaks to the community. We should not lose sight of the need for creative expression." – Ontario session*

**2) Key Issues for the Next Generation of Artists and Arts Administrators**

a. **Access**

Many artists and arts professionals spoke at length about issues related to the theme of access. Many participants said they felt the playing field for young Canadian artists and arts organizations is not equal on a variety of fronts.

There was a perception among many participants that more established artists, arts practices and arts organizations dominate the cultural landscape, making it difficult for emerging artists and arts practices to access arts funding streams, mentorship and needed technical and social infrastructure. In particular, many participants noted that emerging artists are not eligible for a variety of funding programs. The bridge years between arts education and "professional" designation were described as difficult, and many participants said they would like funders to open up more funding streams for emerging artists. A small number of participants said they assume that most arts funding, even streams they are eligible for, are essentially allocated to older artists first. As a result, they do not bother applying for funds.

In addition to problems accessing funding, many participants (particularly those working independently), felt that once they finish their education, they struggle to be treated seriously as emerging artists by exhibitors/ producers. Works created during their education are often not considered eligible to demonstrate experience. During the first years as an artist, many participants said they gained experience presenting their work as part of larger collectives or in uncuration/ group exhibitions. Some artists felt that funders and



juries should recognize these types of presentations as valid in the criteria for certain funding streams. As a result, many young artists said they are at a disadvantage when they apply for support from funding, or seek venues and presenters to exhibit or produce their work.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should specifically allocate more funds for young and emerging artists
- criteria for some funding streams should put less weight on the ability of the artist to demonstrate individual professional experience and more on the worth of the project itself
- uncurated group exhibitions should be recognized as valid demonstrations of experience in the criteria for certain funding streams.

Participants working in new or emerging arts organizations echoed these concerns, and said that they struggle to prove their legitimacy before arts funders and foundations with arts funding mandates. This, in turn, creates difficulties when trying to lobby local governments and property owners to support or offer discounts on costs associated with finding space. Many participants said that they wonder about the future of arts in Canada given that new and emerging organizations struggle so hard to become established.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- funders should allocate more resources towards supporting innovative emerging organizations, with less-stringent criteria than those that currently exist for established entities.
- more funding should be made available for artist-run centres, as these serve as incubators for artistic creation and organizational capacity among artist communities.

*Aboriginal, minority-language, culturally diverse, and disabled artists:*

Some participants from visible and linguistic-minority backgrounds voiced concerns that they struggle to feel fully accepted or recognized by the arts community as a whole in Canada. Many Aboriginal participants said they worry about defining and presenting their work within a traditional Aboriginal context or as new works. This is an issue that has implications for where and how they seek funding and support from funders and arts organizations.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- funders should provide greater clarity about which existing funding streams are appropriate for projects that traverse traditional and experimental boundaries.
- Aboriginals should be encouraged to apply for multiple funding streams for their projects, not just those allocated as "Aboriginal."

*"I think [arts funders] need to rethink the balance between funding old and new." – British Columbia Session*

*"As a First Nations person, art is a vital part of the culture. The health of a community is shown through the arts." – Northern Session*



*"I'm not sure I understand why [the Canada Council] supports "spoken word with music" and not "hip hop." – Ontario*

- Participants wished to see more support for regional initiatives, such as outreach and region-specific programming
- Francophones outside of Quebec and Anglophones within Quebec expressed a need for support for minority language communities

Some culturally diverse/ visible minority and “new Canadian” artists echoed these comments and noted that they have difficulty locating their practices within the Canadian contemporary art scene. Artists working in hip-hop, break dancing and graffiti have difficulty finding support for their work in Canada because they feel their practices are not yet recognized as being legitimate by arts funders or society as a whole.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- there should be greater flexibility in how arts funders define what qualifies for arts funding, and allowances for greater acceptance of urban forms, commercial and experimental forms and how artists mediate between the two

The issue of language was important for many of these participants. There was a sense that gaining access to resources and support networks was a matter of being able to speak a certain kind of language or code. As a result, those artists who are not proficient in either English or French as a first language said they are at a distinct disadvantage when writing grant applications, networking with fellow artists and arts professionals and presenting their work before the public at large because they lack the proper terminology.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should allow for more non-verbal applications, particularly in visual arts practices
- alternatively, arts funders should provide templates and guides for applications to help artists improve their writing skills

It is important to note that there was very low representation of disabled artists in the sessions. One disabled participant noted that, as artists, disabled people struggle to find access to funding and opportunities to perform or present their work because of their disability. In addition, many public exhibition spaces, while technically meeting regulations for accessibility, are not as practically accessible as they could be.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should develop more specific programming and funding streams for disabled artists

*Community Arts Practices:*



Many artists and organizations that meld artistic practice with social justice and social service mandates said that they struggle with accessing funding streams and support from the Canadian arts community as a whole. In addition, participants from arts practices operating in rural and isolated communities said that giving access to basic goods and services needed to support community-based creation (especially technology and expertise) is challenging. Artists and professionals from arts organizations with these mandates are unsure of whether to present themselves as professional artistic or social/ political organizations when trying to access the resources they need and seek greater clarity from arts funders.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- funders should create funding programs for community arts practices and clarify existing criteria for community/ social/ political artists and arts organizations

b. **Outreach and Information**

The issue of how funders conduct outreach and convey information to young and emerging artists and arts professionals appeared to be particularly relevant to participants. Many artists said they are unsure or unaware of many of the services and funding streams that are offered to them. In many cases, artist recommendations for improving existing programs or creating new programs were similar to those already offered by various funders, or by other government funding streams. This was especially true with regards to funding streams for multi-disciplinary works, collaborative projects, and those directed specifically at young and emerging artists. Participants were also largely unaware of existing on-line directories and resources currently available on arts funders' websites.

Young and emerging artists said they are at a disadvantage and lacked access to informal information-sharing networks that funders use to disseminate information. Few participants said they regularly checked arts funders' websites to see if information had changed. Of those who said they had looked at these websites, most said they were looking only for information that applied to a particular funding stream they were interested in.

Many participants who had experience working with arts funders said they learn best from personal contact with program officers at all levels of the application process and that without this contact they are less likely to pursue opportunities that might be available to them. Participants who said they could name a particular program officer said they felt they had a better grasp of how arts funders work and how they could support them in their work. Participants also said it was important to see program officers attending events in their communities and conducting workshop activities. There was a widespread perception among participants that the Canada Council is inaccessible in this regard, especially when compared with provincial/

*"There's lots out there, there's lots of programs.... We don't want more bureaucracy, just clarity." -- Atlantic session*

territorial and municipal funders, who are more visible in their immediate communities. Many participants said they felt uncomfortable calling Canada Council program officers to ask for advice or for general information. Others were simply unaware that this was an option for them. Most participants were unaware of any outreach activities undertaken by the Council in their communities. Participant awareness of provincial and municipal outreach activities varied from province to province.

Their experiences also varied in consulting with program officers. In some sessions, participants spoke of feeling intimidated when approaching arts funders, as they perceive that their staff are only concerned with and responsible for the mechanics of grant administration. In other cases, when participants said they felt connected to their arts funders, they often described more substantial relationships, where project officers not only administer grants, but offer advice and direction for career development.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders, particularly the Canada Council, need to do more to market their activities to young and emerging arts communities
- arts funders should establish more regional and community-based offices
- arts funders should send more program officers to see and support work created by young artists
- arts funders should offer more grant-writing workshops, especially in rural and isolated communities for artists
- arts funders should hold events like The Artistic Leaders Dialogues on an ongoing basis

**c. Training in the "Business of Art"**

Business skills were often cited as a key need among those who attended the consultations. Many participants said they saw their practices as small businesses, but felt they lack training a series of skills that was often described as the "Business of Art". Some participants felt that issues related to business practices and economics needed to be discussed more openly among arts practitioners, and worried that these topics are considered taboo among artistic communities.

The need for business training was expressed not only by arts administrators and professionals, but also by artists, particularly those in working in visual arts, or those who independently produce performances. In addition to professional development, small business expertise is considered a key need for emerging artists, and participants wanted to see more support from arts funders for the development of these skills among young and emerging artists.

Participants outlined the following as part of the needed skill set:

- *Accounting and bookkeeping*: How to properly manage and document project expenses and money earned
- *Negotiation and Pricing*: How to price work and negotiate fair compensation locally, nationally and internationally
- *Tax Law*: What expenses are eligible for deduction when paying taxes and how to submit proper documentation
- *Marketing/ Audience development/ Promotion*: How to develop and implement marketing plans for organizations and artists and use the Internet to market work
- *Export development*: How to approach the topic of finding audiences within and beyond Canada

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

Participants said that arts funders could facilitate "Business of Art" training by:

- Creating or linking to resources on-line
- Hosting a series of workshops around the country on these issues
- Allocating specific funds for artists and arts professionals to take courses in any of these skills
- Funding "secondment" positions for business service professionals to work with arts organizations to help develop business skill capacity
- Workshops given to first-time grant recipients prior to receiving the grant
- Support co-op resources to provide affordable administrative support and training on business matters

d. **Mentorship and Networking**

*Mentorship:*

Participants said that mentorship is vital to their personal, professional and artistic development. Mentors were seen not only as important for creative development among emerging artists, but also as potential business coaches who can help them cultivate relationships with buyers and producers and help them improve their grant writing skills. Many participants said they had experience with mentorship, either formally through a workshop or a funded project, or through an informal connection made through their school or social network.

Participants said they face two important challenges in accessing these opportunities. First, the costs associated with connecting with potential mentors and compensating them for their time is often prohibitively expensive. In addition, some participants are unsure of how to approach potential mentors for their support and feel intimidated approaching established artists and arts organizations with these purposes. A small number of participants said that they felt established artists and arts organizations are unlikely to mentor younger artists because they represent competition for scarce resources. This was of particular concern for artists who, either through lack of awareness or choice, were not members of professional artist organizations.

Arts professionals also stressed the importance of mentorship, not only for personal professional development, but also for organizational capacity building. Arts professionals noted that there are no large arts service organizations that work with young or emerging curators in Canada. Arts professionals from all disciplines seek a wide range of skills and need mentors from a wide array of sectors, including business consulting, accounting and legal affairs.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders could become more involved in facilitating these mentorship by creating on-line portals
- arts funders should devote more funding streams to mentorship and networking activities within and beyond Canada
- arts funders should mandate that established artists and organizations they support devote a portion of their resources to mentoring emerging arts practitioners

*Networking:*

Almost all participants felt that networking with both established mentors and young and emerging artists within and beyond their practices was a valuable activity. Networking was described as the ideal way to foster information and resource-sharing between arts communities. It also had potential benefits in terms of fostering creative collaborations and cross-disciplinary activities.

Many participants, particularly those in urban locations, said they informally network but in an unstructured fashion. Artists and arts professionals from rural and isolated communities struggle to network with other artists outside their immediate worlds, and, as a result, felt they could benefit from more formal networking activities. Some participants drew analogies between the culture of networking in the business world and that of the arts scene and felt there was a strong need to create, foster and maintain more networks for young and emerging arts practitioners in Canada, either on-line or face-to-face. In particular, participants from rural and isolated communities said

they would benefit from more networking and collaborative opportunities with urban artists.

Many participants noted that the Artistic Leaders Dialogues represented an ideal embodiment of the kind of networking opportunity they feel comfortable participating in. Many participants noted that the sessions had exposed them to current expertise and advice among emerging arts practitioners.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders to make the Artistic Leaders Dialogues a regular event for young and emerging artists
- funding bodies should play a role in creating and facilitating on-line portals for young and emerging artists to communicate with each other

e. **Application Processes**

Issues related to arts funding application and selection processes were of particular interest to participants.

*Written Applications*

Many participants who had experience applying for funding said they write applications in the language that they perceive the funders and juries want to hear. There is a perception that arts funding bodies are looking for a certain kind of “art speak” that can cause them to distort their personal motivations around creation. In addition, there are concerns that valuable work created by those without the necessary literacy skills are excluded from the application process. Participants who admitted not having strong writing skills said that the investment of time and energy they devote towards grant writing is often not worth the effort. Some participants, particularly those in visual art, said that the style of written applications that funders ask for forces them to create and frame theoretical criticism of their work, something they often felt uncomfortable doing. Others felt that written application processes essentially favour art created in an academic context, thus excluding folk, self-schooled and outsider practices. Some arts administrator participants reported that they had to develop expertise about how to write when applying before different levels or arts funders. Many worried about how those who lack this savvy deal with the system.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders should allow for more oral or visual submissions
- arts funders should post templates or examples of successful applications posted to their websites or distribute them during workshops so that applicants can get a sense of how much information they need to provide

*Budgeting*

**Comment [a1]:** All streams ask for project descriptions...



Many participants say they lack solid accounting and budgeting skills and struggle with developing budgets for their work. In addition, many participants noted that different levels of arts funders ask for budget information in different ways, forcing applicants applying for multiple levels of funding to spend considerable amounts of time adjusting their forms.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- all levels of arts funders should standardize budget applications for all programming.

*Administration*

Many participants noted that the cost involved in applying for arts funding was a disincentive for participants of lower incomes. Many noted that some arts funders require that participants send as many as six copies of their grant applications. These requirements, along with reproduction and mailing costs, were described as onerous, wasteful and intimidating.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should work to reduce the cost of application by changing expensive reproduction and photocopying requirements
- alternatively, arts funders should incorporate more on-line options in their application processes.

*Timing*

Many participants said that they had difficulty working within some of the current grant deadlines. The chief complaint was that the time from submission to notice of decision was too long and that this prevented them from conducting long-term planning throughout the year.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders create more flexible options for submission deadlines by expanding the number of deadlines for all streams
- funders should create a small number of “emergency” or “short-term” funding streams that have shorter decision making periods.

Arts professionals had a different series of issues with the timing of deadlines. Many participants complained that they often scramble to meet the different deadlines of different funders. This was of particular relevance to participants with experience applying for operational funding.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- municipal, provincial/ territorial and federal funders should coordinate their deadlines, either by allowing for sufficient space between different deadlines (so that organizations can have enough time to prepare strong applications), or by allowing organizations to apply all at once for different funders using a standard application form.

### *Categories*

Many participants said they have a clear understanding of how their work aligns with categories as outlined by arts funders, but this opinion was not universally shared. Many first-time participants are confused about which grants they qualify for and struggle to find an obvious starting point using existing arts funders' web sites and promotional materials. Participants working within crafts and textile-based practices say they are often unsure if or how their work might qualify for funding. Some participants who work in multi-disciplinary practices said they were confused about which funding streams are appropriate for their work. Artists working in popular forms, especially songwriters, hip-hop artists street/ graffiti artists, and break-dancers said they do not feel public arts funders in Canada are interested in supporting their work. Some Aboriginal artists said that they have difficulty deciding between applying for support through Aboriginal-only funding streams and those available to other artists, particularly with work that incorporates traditional and non-traditional elements. Some artists and arts professionals working with organizations with social justice or community development mandates said they wondered if their work qualifies for support at all. Other than urging that their specific practice should qualify for funding, participants said they felt disconnected from how categories are developed by arts funders.

#### *Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders should regularly engage young and emerging arts practitioners in reviewing and refining funding categories
- more funds, across all funding categories, need to be reserved for emerging artists and arts organizations

#### f. **Selection Processes**

##### *Peer Assessment process*

Many participants said they were unsure of how applications for funding are selected. There was an overall low level of understanding of the role of the program officer in screening applications, how juries are selected, if or how emerging artists can apply to participate as jurors, how juries evaluate proposals and what feedback they give to various applications. Among some participants, there was a suspicion that the juries are almost entirely made up of established artists, and that this works against young, emerging and non-professional artists and arts organizations.

#### *Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders need better communication about the peer assessment process
- arts funders should provide more opportunities for young artists and arts professionals to take part in juries

*Feedback*

Participants said that they approach each funding application as a learning experience. Among participants with experience applying for funding, many said they expected that their individual application would receive detailed feedback from juries and program officers and were disappointed when none was forthcoming. A small number of participants said they were aware that they could access jury commentaries on their work through a program officer.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- arts funders should develop a standardized form for juries to submit feedback

*Perceived Regional Disparities*

Some participants in sessions held in Western Canada, Atlantic Canada and Northern Canada said they felt that Canada Council juries favour artists from Ontario and Quebec. Among these participants, many speculated that this was partially because the Canada Council does not have regional offices, and therefore is less aware of artistic communities from which they could find potential jurors, and less aware of regional arts communities. Some arts professionals said there is a widespread perception that arts organizations outside of Ontario and Quebec are at a disadvantage when applying for support because they are not perceived as being important by juries.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- the Canada Council needs to do a better job demonstrating how it disperses funds across Canada through online and printed materials

g. **Eligible Project Funding***Artists:*

There was significant discussion among participants about what costs should be included as eligible project costs for funded organizations and projects. Overall, many participants felt that project funding is currently too restrictive and want to see funders offer more flexibility in how they allow applicants to spend project funds. Participants whose practices use technical equipment maintained that this is a key issue. Many artists felt that funders should allow for applicants to use project funds for purchase of equipment and other capital costs, as owning equipment was seen as key to developing the individual artists' long-term capacity. Artists from rural and isolated communities noted that the rental and shipping of technical equipment can be prohibitively expensive and that they would stand to benefit more if funders would support artists who directly invest in capital costs. Participants in the North and in Newfoundland & Labrador noted that travel grants are insufficient for travel from their

regions to other areas in Canada. Many participants say their practices are not well suited to the “project” model of funding.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- the terms of funding should be broadened to de-emphasize project funding and emphasize “cost of living” grants and “emergency project support”; also multi-year funding should be accessible to individual artists
- more needs to be done to inform young artists about various types of non-project funding streams

Arts Organizations:

Like artists, many arts professionals said they would like funders to allow for more capital costs in eligible project costs. As was the case with artists from rural and isolated communities, arts professionals noted that the costs associating with renting and shipping technical equipment were significant. Many of these participants felt that funders should be open to supporting the purchase of this equipment, since it saves money and builds longer-term (and sorely needed) infrastructure. Many arts professionals also lamented the amount of time and effort involved in applying every year for operational funding.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should allow more emerging organizations to apply for multi-year funding, if they are able to demonstrate experience and capacity to manage funds

h. **New Audiences: Dissemination and Promotion**

Many participants said they want to have an impact beyond their immediate network of friends, colleagues and artistic peers. Finding time and access to resources to explore audience development was perceived as difficult, especially when many felt they struggle enough to find resources to support their practices. Several participants noted that funders may have a role to play in helping artists disseminate their work, both within their artistic disciplines and to the public in general. This was envisioned as grants given to arts organizations and artists specifically to help explain contemporary and traditional arts practices.

Some participants, however, expected their audience to be limited to others who are engaged in their specific artistic practice, and were vocal about what they saw as the limits of pursuing new audiences among the general public. These participants doubted that much of the public could be enticed or convinced into becoming audiences for the arts, regardless of the amount of outreach conducted. Others noted that artists should not be tempted into diluting their work so that it appeals to public consumption. Some of these participants

*"[In an isolated community] access to things like cables and technical stuff is a problem. So we have to rent things from, say Sudbury.. and it's pretty expensive." – Ontario Session*

*"How do we get people to go to the second event after they have gone to the first one? How do we make it easy for the audience to come? This is the responsibility of the arts community and the Council." – Ontario Session*

were careful to note that funds devoted towards dissemination and promotion should not come at the expense of existing arts budgets.

Many participants said it is important for artists to develop national and international audiences. While part of this impulse rooted in a desire to find new commercial opportunities, many participants also felt a strong need to tell their stories to audiences beyond their communities. Some participants were keen to dispel stereotypes that Canadians may have about their regions. Most participants are also eager to develop new audiences among arts communities abroad, and are hopeful that new opportunities for artistic collaboration will emerge from international audience development.

*Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:*

- funders should devote more resources to promotion of arts activities and the role the arts play in society
- arts funders should devote more resources to the dissemination of artistic practices
- arts funders should work with the private sector to leverage new money for promotion and dissemination of arts
- arts funders should increase support and resources for artists to work inter-provincially and internationally
- increased opportunities for artists to work in schools

i. **Venues/ Space**

Issues related to securing stable venues and spaces for exhibition, presentation, rehearsal and living were of prime importance to artists from almost every background.

*Exhibition/ Presentation Venues:*

Young artists and arts professionals said that emerging arts communities are at a distinct disadvantage when attempting to secure space for exhibition and presentation of work. Young artists, particularly those from rural and isolated communities, struggle to get the attention of existing venues both within their communities and beyond. Many felt that emerging artists are ghettoized by established production and presentation venues that are reluctant to take chances on artists who they perceive lack experience. This, in turn, means that emerging artists struggle to build their resume in their early years, a problem which many participants fear makes them unlikely to get support from arts funders. Some artists proposed that arts funders mandate that funded institutions devote a portion of their resources towards presenting and exhibiting work by emerging artists.

Arts professionals said that they struggle to find the resources they need to secure and maintain venues for their work. Many say they feel that established venues tend to monopolize potential funding streams, such as arts funders, infrastructure grants and private donors, thus impeding the ability of new and emerging venues to grow. In major urban areas, many participants complained that some established institutions were doing little to support emerging artists by donating extra space or expertise, preferring to pursue commercial activities.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should mandate that the organizations they support devote a portion of their resources to providing space or expertise to young and emerging organizations.

*Space:*

The issue of space for artists was also of prime concern, particularly for participants in major urban areas. Participants said they often struggle to access space for rehearsal, creation and living needs. Many participants felt that arts funders should be involved in providing grants directly to artists for securing these types of spaces. Others, who had more experience applying for funds, acknowledged that project grants can often be used to subsidize space for artists.

Synthesis of Participant Recommendations:

- arts funders should be more involved in advocating on behalf of arts communities to help change municipal tax structures to encourage the development and growth of spaces for artists
- arts funders should devote resources directly towards the purchase and rental of space used by artists
- all levels of government should create inventories of unused buildings and spaces that they own, and offer them at a subsidized rate to young artists

### 3) Discussion of arts and community

#### a. **Arts and Quality of Life**

In broader group discussion, participants were asked to describe what they saw as the importance of the arts to quality of life. Most participants see arts communities contributing in a variety of ways. Many noted the capacity of the arts to provide entertainment and diversion is likely seen by society as the main value. But many also noted the importance of art in helping Canadians create and frame their identities, based on geographical, linguistic, socio-economic, ethno-cultural, disability and sexual-preference factors. Participants noted that no other sector of the economy plays as important a role in building identity as the arts.

Many also noted that the arts contribute to the overall economy. For individual communities, arts activities help attract and retain needed people, as it is part of human nature to seek some sort of cultural activity in the communities where they live. Others note that arts sectors are vital to the tourism industry, helping attract visitors to many of the unique cultural experiences that communities offer. Some participants noted that a variety of businesses, including technical support firms, bars, restaurants and construction contractors benefit from the direct expenditures of arts organizations and their patrons.

Many young artists felt it was important for them to connect with and work within their communities. A variety of participants noted that the arts are increasingly being used in the delivery of social services and health care. Many who work in community arts practices noted that the arts are especially effective in helping marginalized youth find their voice, thus contributing to their desire to work within society. Others noted that the arts are being used for a variety of therapeutic purposes, helping medical practitioners treat those with variety of physical and mental health issues. Some participants said that while they value these kinds of practices, they want to retain the value in "art for arts sake," and worry about having to "justify" their practices by demonstrating a larger social, cultural or economic utility.

b. **Arts as Challenge to Society**

Some participants, particularly those working in community-based or theoretical practices felt that a primary function of the arts was to challenge societal norms. Arts activities were often described as ways of giving voice to marginalized communities, allowing them to create and document experiences that are hidden from the broader public. Aboriginal participants, in particular, felt that this function was vital to the health and well-being of their communities. Some participants, however, feel that art has a duty to be explicitly confrontational, expressing difficult truths to mainstream society. For some, this means that artists need to be willing to be provocative.

c. **Artists' Perceptions of How Canadians Value Arts**

Many participants said they are unsure that the general public fully appreciates the value that the arts bring to society. Many felt that European countries are far more inclined to see the value of arts activities, because of long traditions of support either through government or patronage. Participants often said they worry that Canadian society at large believes arts activities are luxuries, and thus only accessible to individuals that can afford to participate. Others worry that many arts activities are perceived to be "boring" or "difficult" when compared to other options for spending leisure time. Some participants said they felt a tension in their communities between support for public funding of sports and recreation and

*"People have criticized artists for "taking" taxpayers money. This means that for artists ... we need to create art that helps other areas of the community."  
-- Manitoba session*

public funding of arts. While society is quick to outline the social benefits of sports and recreation activities, there is less of a shared understanding of the wider benefits of the arts.

*Worries about attracting new audiences who lack education in the arts:*

There was widespread concern among many participants that arts audiences are in decline. Many artists noted that people of their generation are some of the hardest audiences to engage as audience members and participants. Many arts practitioners specifically attribute this perception to their sense that various levels of government have placed less of a priority on arts education in schools. Some said they particularly worry about having to compete for time and attention with popular art forms, such as music and mainstream films. Some participants reported feeling a duty to work in schools as instructors or to volunteer in outreach activities aimed at exposing young people to the arts.

*Socio-economic barriers in arts:*

Some participants were concerned that socio-economic barriers prevent Canadians of lower incomes from accessing or participating in arts activities. Many worried that because art is seen by many in Canadian society as a luxury, those with lower incomes are unable to make the arts a priority in their lives. As a result, there was a concern that lower-income Canadians are less likely to have quality arts education in their schools or have money to immerse their children in private arts instruction. In addition, some participants worried that the perceived high cost of attending many traditional arts activities acts as a further barrier to full and equitable participation in the arts across various socio-economic levels. Some participants, however, disputed this view, noting that even in many marginalized communities, community-based arts practices serve an important and vital role that is not recognized by the broader arts community in Canada. Regardless, many participants believe that more needs to be done to foster greater access for all arts experiences among Canadians of different socio-economic backgrounds.



## 4.0 PROVINCIAL/ TERRITORIAL REPORTS

Though many issues were raised across multiple sessions, each consultation was unique and nuanced, given the composition of the participants and the regional perspectives voiced. The following represents a summary of the key issues participants raised in each session.

### 1) ***Alberta***

#### Overview

The Alberta session was held in Edmonton at Grant MacEwan College on June 13 and was co-hosted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) and the Canada Council. Twenty-four participants attended, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. In particular, care was taken to ensure that Aboriginal and Francophone participants, along with those from rural and isolated communities, were able to attend. Simultaneous interpretation services were provided for the plenary sessions, and one of the small group sessions was facilitated by a bilingual moderator.

#### Economic Sustainability

As artists, few participants said they lived entirely from their creative work. Most said they either worked jobs in fields unrelated to their practice, or had part or full-time positions working as arts administrators. Many say they worry about the long-term economic sustainability of their current situations. Inflation was a serious concern for many participants, particularly those working as arts professionals, as salaries and fees in the arts sector have failed to keep up with rising cost of living expenses. Participants noted that rapidly increasing cost-of-living expenses (especially for housing and rehearsal and exhibition space in urban areas) have made it harder for artists and organizations to work in Alberta. Many artists say they feel the pressure to leave Alberta for other parts of the country to build their artistic careers.

#### Infrastructure

It was regularly noted that due to the strength of the provincial economy, the population of Alberta is rapidly increasing, putting greater pressure on communities to attract new people. Some said they expect that a rapidly growing provincial economy will ultimately create a more financially supportive climate for arts, through larger audiences and increased donor support or public funding. Participants said they are hopeful that the influx of money will mean that artists will feel more comfortable staying in and moving to Alberta. Many rural participants said they would like to have more opportunities to access the networking and mentorship infrastructure of urban arts communities.

#### Audiences in Alberta and Abroad

Participants said they are still trying to understand the size of arts audiences in Alberta. Some participants felt that there may be a lack of Alberta-based arts media to document and “publicize” their work, thus making it difficult to expose potential audiences to locally-created work. Others noted that even in major urban areas, there are very few designated “arts neighborhoods” or “salons” where artists, arts organizations and arts audiences can be oriented around. This in turn diminishes the ability of arts practitioners and arts participants to feel a sense of community built around experiencing artist culture. Artists from rural and isolated locations say that to survive as artists, they need to make special effort to engage the local community as volunteers and supporters of their work. For this reason, some participants said that it is difficult to present or create difficult or challenging work, and that avant-garde arts practices are generally unseen outside major cities.

Many participants said they were eager to present their work to others in Canada, and were eager to dispel stereotypes that other Canadians might have about Alberta’s culture. Other participants reported feeling that artists in Alberta need evidence that they have had an impact outside the province, particularly in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, and many are worried that they will have to move to those cities to find sustainable audiences for their work.

#### Relationship to Arts Funders

Generally speaking, many participants spoke of feeling intimidated about dealing with arts funders and project officers from both the AFA and the Canada Council. This was a disincentive to make contact with project officers to get advice, help with applications, or general career directions. Many participants were more likely to approach arts funding bodies in Alberta than the Canada Council. Some participants noted that this may be due to the fact that they have no face-to-face contact with Canada Council staff, and, as a result, they assume that the Council is less aware of and less interested in supporting the Alberta arts community. Many Alberta participants discussed a perception among young artists and arts professionals that arts funder juries are reluctant to grant funding to artists that lack a proven track record of being able to manage the funds effectively. Participants said they tend to assume the Canada Council supports artists from Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia over artists from their province, and many wondered about how equitably arts funding was distributed by the Council across the country.

Despite the general perception that the AFA was “closer” to the Alberta arts community, some participants had some key comments on how it functions. Aboriginal artists in Alberta noted that the AFA does not currently have an Aboriginal component. As a result, many Aboriginal participants said they felt they were at a disadvantage when compared with other Canadian Aboriginal artists who are able to apply for funding on a national, provincial/ territorial and municipal level. Other participants pointed out that the AFA serves as a direct funding arm of the provincial government. Some participants felt the AFA is reluctant to support challenging, difficult and controversial work because of political concerns, and urged the province to make the AFA an arms-length funding body. Others wondered about whether the AFA has a formal role in promoting and advocating for arts issues in Alberta. Some participants also noted that the AFA website needs to

*“Arts can build smaller communities. If you want doctors, you need to have arts.” – Alberta session*

be made more user-friendly for potential and existing applicants. Participants were, in particular, interested in seeing the AFA make major investments in the website's technical capacity, particularly with regards to submission of support materials for on-line applications.



## 2) ***British Columbia***

### Overview

The British Columbia session was held in Vancouver at the Roundhouse Theatre on April 19 and was co-hosted by the British Columbia Arts Council, the Canada Council and the City of Vancouver's Department of Cultural Affairs. Twenty-eight participants attended the session, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience, gender and demographic backgrounds, including Aboriginal, visible minority, rural and isolated communities. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

### Economic Sustainability

Participants said that as young and emerging arts practitioners, they accept a lower standard of living than the general population. Several participants noted that working in the arts often means that they lack access to quality health plans and pension systems. Many attribute their economic situation to the fact that they are in the early parts of their careers, and are therefore putting investments into education and training, capital costs and mentorship that they hope will help them build a long-term arts career. Some noted that because of the high cost of housing in British Columbia, particularly in Vancouver and Victoria, artists and arts practitioners are forced to work long hours, often over several jobs to find the means to support basic living costs. Many are hopeful that they can build resumes that will allow them to find more stable employment or develop stable practices. As young and emerging artists, however, they are caught in a "Catch 22" situation – because they lack experience, they lack opportunities.

### Arts Community Voices

Several participants said they felt the British Columbia arts community lacked a unifying voice or sense of overall community. Many participants had a variety of suggestions for improving municipal zoning and postering bylaws, finding incentives for developers to build arts-friendly communities, and changes to existing tax structures to help new and emerging artists. Some felt they could play a role in helping the city prepare and beautify for the upcoming Winter Olympics. Some participants said that emerging artists and arts professionals lack institutional support from cohesive bodies that could present these ideas and advocate on behalf of their causes. Many participants felt the province's artists need to work together across disciplines to better advocate for their issues before the media, and to share more resources and information.

Several participants spoke at length about the need to integrate arts into all spheres of society, including economic, cultural and political sectors. Some participants were concerned that arts communities were insulated from meaningful engagement with society at large, and that arts practitioners have an obligation to contribute to broader civic conversations. This was particularly reflected in the desire many participants voiced to expand arts audiences beyond current boundaries so that they better reflect society. Among some new Canadian and visible minority participants there were concerns that diverse cultural art forms

were only reaching audiences within their own communities and were not seen as “regular” art within the larger artistic community.

#### Organizational Structures

Many participants voiced concerns about how emerging and existing arts organizations work in British Columbia. Some were concerned about the viability and sustainability of non-profit arts organizations, and wondered if governance training and guidance would help build more stable institutions. Arts professionals noted that emerging arts organizations struggle to conduct fundraising activities because achieving charitable status is onerous. Several participants noted that established organizations, particularly those that receive government arts funding have an obligation to support the growth of the arts community, particularly in regards to new and emerging organizations.

#### Spaces and Venues

The issue of finding space for British Columbia artists and arts organizations was of much interest to participants. Many noted that high real estate prices in Vancouver and Victoria limit the amount of space young and emerging artists can access. Some participants wanted to see more support from established arts organizations, which could donate or cheaply rent out unused space, or host more residencies for emerging practitioners. Others said that artists and arts organizations working in different disciplines need to do a better job working together to build collaborative and multi-use spaces. Many felt that municipal governments should develop incentives for these kinds of arrangements through changes in tax law. Others felt that arts funders should allow British Columbia artists to invest more of the funding they do receive into capital projects.

#### Relationship to Funders

Issues related to training and education were very important for British Columbia participants, and many felt that all levels of arts funders should be more involved in supporting creative development by offering grants to young artists for education and instruction, supporting mentorship activities and funding residencies and travel both within and beyond the province. Participants also said that arts funders need to play a more prominent role in supporting activities that help build on the province’s art community by supporting projects that incorporate collaborative and resource-sharing agreements. Some participants noted, however, that a balance needs to be struck between funding activities that promote audience development and funding experimental works.

More specifically, emerging participants noted that arts funders need to be more flexible in their programming and eligibility criteria. Some participants wanted arts funders to recognize alternative, non-institutional arts training in a more meaningful way, particularly with regards to eligibility criteria. Other participants felt that arts funders could introduce more flexibility in how they support interdisciplinary projects and practices. Some also noted that arts funders need to do more to value traditional craft expertise in their funding streams.

### 3) ***Manitoba***

#### *Overview*

The Manitoba session was held in Winnipeg at the Red River College on June 12 and was co-hosted by the Manitoba Arts Council (MAC), the Canada Council and the Winnipeg Arts Council (WAC). Twenty-four participants attended the session, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, visible minority, rural and isolated communities as well as Franco-Manitobans. Simultaneous interpretation services and bilingual facilitators were provided to ensure that Francophone participants were able to contribute in their language of choice. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

#### *Economic Sustainability*

There was a distinct difference between how Winnipeg-based participants felt about their economic situation and those from other areas of the province. Many participants in Winnipeg said they worked a variety of jobs, particularly in arts education and administration to support their practices. Others, particularly those who work for performing companies said they work on a seasonal basis, and usually go on unemployment insurance during off-season periods. Several participants said they also received support for projects through municipal and provincial arts funders to support their creative projects and when they do, they were able to work less at other jobs for the duration of their grants. Participants from outside Winnipeg said they lacked similar opportunities, due to a lack of arts organizations, presenters and infrastructure. As a result, participants from outside Winnipeg said they tended to work in jobs not related to the arts (or their artistic discipline) to support their artistic practices.

#### *Manitoba Arts Communities*

Many said that local arts communities were very close-knit. As a result, many reported working with others both within and beyond their discipline to pool resources, thus enabling them to find resources for creation. Mentorship, in particular, was less of a concern among Manitoba participants – many spoke of the strong network of mentoring organizations existing within the Manitoba arts community. Many participants, however, said that they would like to have more time and money to devote to their own work and fear their practices are suffering from their community commitments. A significant portion of participants reported wishing to be able to withdraw from the local arts community to focus on their personal practices, both in terms of producing work, but also in terms of seeking new audiences outside of the province. Other participants said they would like to focus on developing the business skills they need to become fully self-employed. Participants from rural and isolated communities, on the other hand, said they had more immediate needs, as they lack access to resources, equipment and expertise.

#### *Audience Development*

Many participants from Winnipeg praised the tight-knit nature of the city's arts community across different practices and disciplines. Participants said they felt it was possible to feel like they have made a mark among their peers within the city, and that was something they felt was a key benefit of living there. Few participants said they see more opportunities to expand their audience within their communities, or within Manitoba as a whole. As a result, many say they want to make more of an impact with potential national and international audiences. Some artists and arts professionals say that they expect they will have to leave the province for a significant portion of their careers as a way of finding new audiences.

Relationship to Arts Funders

Many participants felt they had a much closer relationship with municipal and provincial arts funders than they did with the Canada Council. Many attributed this to the fact that they are familiar with municipal and provincial program officers, who are often seen attending events, helping applicants complete proposals for funding and conducting outreach activities in the forms of workshops and seminars. Many also noted that WAC plays an important role in fostering community building because it assembles and distributes a monthly newsletter that documents upcoming events, workshops and opportunities for artists to meet and collaborate. Participants felt that the Canada Council and Manitoba Arts Council could play a more vital role for emerging artists by creating portals, blogs, discussion boards and databases for use by all artists to help arts practitioners connect with regional, national and international opportunities.

Participants in Manitoba also had a variety of recommendations for future new programming directions for arts funders, including business training, education and development, housing and space purchase and support for artists who are employed on a seasonal basis to allow them to pursue smaller projects. Some participants noted that all levels of arts funders should prioritize audience development activities, especially within communities that may feel excluded. Others noted that new and emerging organizations, particularly those presenting or supporting new and experimental practices, are in need of greater support from all levels of arts funders.



#### **4) Newfoundland & Labrador**

##### Overview

The Newfoundland & Labrador session was held on May 31 at the Masonic Temple in St. John's. It was co-hosted by the Newfoundland & Labrador Arts Council (NLAC) and the Canada Council. Twenty participants attended the session, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, rural and isolated communities. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

##### Economic Sustainability

Many participants said they struggle to find work in fields related to the arts, such as in arts administration, education and technical support. Participants noted that employment in the arts is often seasonal and centered on festivals. Others noted that because of the small size of the arts scene, they are often forced to find full-time work in jobs unrelated to their field. As a result, many participants were frustrated by the fact that their economic situation made them feel as if their practices were being relegated to hobby status. Participants in smaller communities, in particular, spoke about the difficulty achieving professional status among their peers and within society at large. Other participants talked about the impact of artist unions in smaller communities, noting that union regulations about pay scales make it difficult for them to work within union guidelines in their communities, because of the small size of audiences and limited opportunities for presentation and exhibition. Those with experience studying art in training colleges or universities said they felt they had a more economically sustainable lifestyle as students, as they were often funded through fellowships and bursaries.

##### Institutional Capacity

Participants noted that artists in the province struggle to find venues for presentation and spaces for creation because the arts industry in the province is perceived to be small. The lack of venues in Newfoundland & Labrador was described as being especially difficult for new and emerging artists, who are forced to compete with established artists to present and market their work. In addition, many participants said there are few resources available to help them develop audiences beyond the province. Many participants said they felt arts organizations and institutions need to do more to nurture new and emerging artists and arts organizations. Others felt that local communities could do more to develop existing unused buildings and facilities for artistic purposes.

##### Audiences and Audience Development

Many participants noted that Newfoundland & Labrador have rich cultural traditions, which are well-supported and attended by local audiences. Many participants, however, noted that it is difficult for artists to develop local audiences for avant-garde, challenging, provocative or non-traditional work. Some participants spoke of how arts practices are often linked to the province's tourism efforts, and that while that helps build audiences, it also hinders experimentation in artistic practices. As a

result, they felt their audiences are more likely to be found outside their province, particularly in Canada's largest cities. Some participants said they are having more success by making investments in traveling to exhibit and present their work. Participants from rural and isolated communities noted that travel outside the province is especially costly, given that they first have to get to St. John's or Gander to access flights outside the province.

Some participants noted that arts communities need to be self-critical when approaching their broader engagement in the community. Some said that artists need to be more visible on social justice concerns, contributing to broader discussions about environmental sustainability, poverty, health and youth issues.

#### Mentorship & Networking

Many participants, particularly those from rural and isolated communities, noted the importance of mentorship as a way of overcoming the obstacles of isolation and lack of institutional capacity. Participants from rural communities said most mentorship opportunities exist in St. John's and noted that more needs to be done among rural arts communities to foster mentorship networks that service their needs.

Many participants also spoke about the value of networking for arts practitioners in the province. Participants from rural and isolated communities noted that networking enables them to seek out opportunities for presentation and collaboration, while remaining in their home communities. Participants from all backgrounds noted that they would like to have more opportunities to network with arts practitioners from outside Newfoundland & Labrador.

#### Relationship to Arts Funders

As was the case with many participants nationwide, Newfoundland & Labrador-based participants felt they had a much closer relationship with municipal and provincial arts funders than they did with the Canada Council. Many attributed this to the fact the NLAC had supported many artists across the province and offered a variety of flexible granting programs. Others noted that NLAC staff members are regularly seen as participants and audiences. As was the case in Manitoba, many noted that NLAC plays an important role in fostering community building through active solicitation and outreach efforts. Participants noted, however, that while the NLAC supports many artists across the province, the grant amounts are very small – for some, too small to be of real benefit. Others noted that the NLAC does not cover operating expenses, and that other options for support, such as the Canada Council, are highly competitive. This ultimately makes it difficult for emerging arts organizations to be sustainable. Some participants felt the NLAC should shift its priorities and offer more substantial support to fewer artists. Others disagreed with this notion.

Many participants perceived the Canada Council to be difficult to deal with and invisible to arts communities in Newfoundland & Labrador. Few participants had any experience applying for funding, or using Canada Council resources, and those that have said that competition for funding feels fierce, particularly in the areas of operational funding. Some participants noted that the requirements for applying for

*"A healthy cultural community needs healthy criticism. We need permission to be more critical of ourselves so that we can build the quality of our core work to build broader support." – Newfoundland & Labrador Session*

funding are demanding, rigid and bureaucratic, and that information was difficult to glean from the Council's officers or from its website. Others felt that they needed to force fit their project proposals to meet Canada Council guidelines, making them feel that the process of applying for funding was diminishing their original vision. Some participants noted that the Canada Council could become more visible by conducting more outreach in the province, and by being more aggressive in marketing the information resources it has.



## 5) **Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island**

### Overview

The Atlantic province session was held on May 29 at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax. It was co-hosted by the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, the New Brunswick Arts Board, the Prince Edward Island Council for the Arts and the Canada Council. Twenty-two participants attended the session from all three provinces, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, visible minority, Francophone, rural and isolated communities. Simultaneous interpretation services and bilingual facilitators were provided to ensure that Francophone participants were able to contribute in their language of choice. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

### Economic Sustainability

Most participants said they are primarily sustaining themselves either through employment or through fellowships or student loans they are receiving as part of their studies. Some participants say they try to keep involved in the arts by seeking employment as arts administrators, but that the number of these positions is limited, especially in rural and isolated communities. A few participants worried that their communities did not see the larger value of what artists bring to their communities and worry that society feels that artists "should be poor and should suffer" for their practices.

Some participants noted that arts play a role in the gentrification of neighborhoods and communities. This gentrification ultimately hurts artists and arts organizations by raising costs for housing and exhibition and rehearsal space.

### Student and Emerging Stages

This session featured considerable discussion about the differing needs and issues facing students and emerging artist participants. Many students said that while they are able to support themselves either through loans or fellowships, they felt unprepared for what they will face when they complete their education. Student participants said they would benefit most from information on grant writing and marketing their work.

Emerging participants (those who had completed education, but did not identify as professionals) said they have struggled to find time and resources to devote towards their practices after they complete their education. In addition to information on marketing skills and grant writing, many said they would benefit most from having more experience with exhibiting and presenting their work. Some participants noted that emerging artists often gain experience through group exhibitions and presentations, pooling resources with other artists to share venue space, but that these types of activities are not treated as seriously in large arts community. There was also some discussion about whether joining professional organizations and unions would be of benefit to them in the "emerging" stage of

their career. For some participants, union membership was essential to feeling part of the local and regional artistic community. For others, however, union membership created obstacles for participants who felt constrained about union regulations on pay scales.

As was the case in British Columbia, participants in the Atlantic session noted that emerging arts organizations face a variety of challenges in building capacity, particularly with regards to fundraising. Because achieving charitable status is difficult, many said they lack credibility with potential sources of funding in the private sector and among private sponsors.

Audience Development

Some participants said they felt most validated when they were able to access audiences and collaborative opportunities beyond their immediate communities. Many reported accessing these opportunities through on-line networking, or through pursuing opportunities for exchanges and residencies outside their communities. Others said they were unsure about how to promote their work outside their home community, and were looking for support and expertise on marketing, business development and networking.

In terms of local audiences, many participants noted that cost remains a main barrier for their communities, particularly those with lower incomes. Many participants felt arts organizations and government should do more to help make arts attendance more cost-effective.

Relationship to Funders

As was the case with many participants nationwide, attendees felt they had a much closer relationship with municipal and provincial arts funders than they did with the Canada Council. Participants felt this was primarily due to a lack of personal contact with Canada Council officers or with people with expertise in applying for funding from the Council. As a result, many participants said they felt intimidated, and were likely to feel as if the work involved was not worth the effort. Some participants felt that the Canada Council artificially groups together Atlantic provinces and treats them as if they were one region, rather than respecting their different cultural and artistic attributes. Some participants were curious about how the Council distributed funding across the country. Participants from Acadian backgrounds were particularly interested in understanding how funds and resources allocated for Francophone artists were distributed across the country – many felt that Quebec was over-represented, at the expense of Francophone communities across the country.

Participants said that while there was less money available through local funders, they tend to feel they have a better chance of receiving funding. But many noted that receiving funding from a provincial body meant they were prevented from completing project work outside the province. For this reason, some participants felt torn-- while receiving successful provincial funding helps them create work, it also prevents them from pursuing opportunities outside their provinces which may have more long-term impact on their careers. Many participants said they would like to see some of these restrictions loosened.



Overall, participants noted that funders need to address some important gaps in their programs. Some noted that funders have not addressed the funding needs of community-based/ social justice mandated artists and arts organizations. Others noted that emerging artists are considered ineligible for many programs and funding streams, and that funders should relax criteria that prevent them from competing for funding with established artists. Artistic practices that blend commercial and non-commercial practices are widely felt to be poorly understood by arts funders, and many participants urged funders to not exclude projects that incorporate popular forms. Some participants felt that funders have a role to play in better explaining the function of the artist in society, and raising the profile of arts among the general public.

Cultural Preservation

Some participants spoke of concerns about the preservation of minority cultures and languages, particularly among Acadian and Aboriginal communities. Participants involved in traditional practices said they worried about the erosion, not only of their cultures, but of their specific practices, and the audiences for them.



## 6) ***Ontario***

### Overview

The Ontario session was held on May 10 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. It was co-hosted by the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council. Twenty-four participants attended the session representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, visible minority, Francophone, rural and isolated communities. Simultaneous interpretation services and bilingual facilitators were provided to ensure that Francophone participants were able to contribute in their language of choice. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

### Economic Sustainability

As was with the case with many other participants across the country, Ontario participants noted that they make sacrifices such as lower pay and long working hours to work either as artists or arts professionals. Many individual artists noted that as emerging artists, they subsidize their creation out of pocket, as they lack the experience and track record to attract funding from organizations or arts funders. Participants working with arts organizations said they are forced to work long hours to meet the needs of the communities they service. Participants from new Canadian and visible minority backgrounds noted that their opportunities are especially limited, and worry that work they produce that reflects issues related to ethnicity and race is considered of limited interest to the larger arts community.

### Community Identities

The issue of identity was important for many attendees. Participants from Francophone communities noted that the arts played a vital role in helping them understand themselves as Francophones distinct from the Quebecois. In particular, many participants said they felt envious of the support that Quebec artists and arts organizations receive. Others, particularly those from new Canadian backgrounds, noted that arts played an important function in helping them mediate between their native and Canadian cultures.

### Access to Infrastructure and Space

Access to infrastructure was a major issue for Ontario attendees. In urban communities, participants said they had to compete with many more established artists and arts organizations for access to resources for creation, exhibition and presentation venues, and space for rehearsal and creation. Many participants said they felt that many established organizations that have recently benefited from major capital campaigns have ignored the emerging arts communities and have focused solely on finding more profitable ways of renting out unused space than assisting emerging artists.

Participants from rural and isolated communities noted that while they are usually able to access space, they struggle to access other important elements of infrastructure, including technology and equipment, mainly because it doesn't exist

in their communities. This was of particular concern for participants from isolated communities, who noted that finding basic technical equipment is an enormous challenge for their practices. Participants in rural and isolated communities say that much work needs to be done in terms of building capacity through capital investments, but are unsure where that money will come from.

#### Relationship to Funders

Unlike many participants in other sessions, many participants had experience applying for funding from both the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) and Canada Council. Furthermore, aside from comments on specific programs, some participants said they had a broadly similar view of both organizations. While many participants said they appreciated the OAC's work in attending and supporting arts activities presented by young and emerging artists, some participants noted that they do not have a personal relationship with funding officers with either the OAC or the Canada Council. Participants from visible minority and new Canadian backgrounds felt that neither body was involved in their community's artistic practices, and as such did not have a solid understanding of their specific needs.

How both the funders establish and define categories for funding was an important issue for many participants. Many participants felt that the councils have a poor understanding of how artistic forms and disciplines are changing, and said they would like to play a more active role in helping to regularly define these practices as advisory board members or jurors. Participants in urban arts practices, such as hip-hop, graffiti and break dancing felt that both councils had a poor understanding of these forms and were more likely to assume they were too "popular" to qualify for support. Some participants also noted that there is significant confusion among community arts practitioners about where to seek funding, both with the OAC and the Canada Council.

Ontario participants also had a variety of suggestions for future directions arts funders could take. Participants also noted that funders could play a more active and formal role in fostering a sense of community among artists and across levels of expertise and discipline. Most participants were very enthusiastic about the Artistic Leaders Dialogues sessions and hoped that arts funders would continue hosting these types of meetings regularly. Some participants also thought that the arts funders could work to encourage and foster corporate and foundation funding of the arts in the province. Francophone participants in particular felt that both the OAC and the Canada Council need to do more in supporting Francophone arts practitioners living outside Quebec, because of the importance of art to their linguistic identity.

## 7) *Quebec*

### Overview

The Quebec session was held on June 19 at *le monument-national* in Montreal. It was co-hosted by the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* (CALQ) and the Canada Council. Eighteen participants attended the session, representing a wide range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, visible minority, Anglophone, rural and isolated communities. Simultaneous translation services and bilingual facilitators were provided to ensure that Anglophone participants were able to contribute in their language of choice. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

### Economic Sustainability

Some participants noted that Quebec is considered an attractive place for artists from across the country, due to the size of the perceived audiences, and lower cost-of-living expenses in urban areas like Montreal. Despite this, some participants said that they are often forced to make sacrifices in time and money to support their involvement as artistic creators and professionals. Many participants said they believe they are making an investment or making sacrifices to gain the experience they expect they will need as professionals. Others, however, said they were beginning to question their involvement in the arts due to personal and financial struggles. Some attendees emphasized the value of having entrepreneurial expertise in their specific practice as key to their future, while others emphasized the importance of developing skills in multiple disciplines and in multiple contexts (creator, performer, administrator, technical support). Many participants noted that while they would like to have more money to support creative work, they have other personal financial goals unrelated to their artistic practice. Due to the low pay of jobs related to the arts and the unpredictable nature of the market for their work, many participants say they worry about their long-term financial stability.

### Audience Development

Many participants believe that while it is critical to their practices that they find new audiences beyond their immediate social circles, it is often difficult for them to define who those audiences might be. Some participants expect to find their audiences among people who are already interested or working in their discipline, either locally or in national and/ or international markets. Some participants felt that much work needs to be done within the province to demonstrate the value of the arts to those who are currently not engaged with them, largely through education in the school and public outreach. Other participants believe that artists could find money for marketing and audience development by seeking more partnerships and sponsorships with the private sector.

### Relationship to Funders

Many participants said they had somewhat distant relationships with both levels of arts funders, even though some had experience applying for and receiving money from them. Many felt that given the size of the arts community in Quebec, applying

for funding felt more like a lottery than a juried process. Some participants said that funders were too rigid in the categories they support, particularly when it came to multi-disciplinary and collaborative projects. Others felt that funders put too many restrictions on how funded artists and arts organizations use grant money, thus stifling innovation. Participants who had little experience with CALQ and the Canada Council often said that their lack of experience was due to the fact that both bodies exclude emerging artists by forcing them to demonstrate they have experience at a time when this is difficult to do so. Some participants felt both levels of funders need to do a better job nurturing unsuccessful applicants, by giving them more feedback and actively encouraging them to reapply.

As for future directions, participants noted the importance of networking to Quebec arts practitioners, and felt that both CALQ and the Canada Council could do more to support networking activity, either using on-line portals, or hosting Artistic Leaders Dialogues sessions on a more regular basis. Others felt that arts funders need to broaden the criteria for organizational support to include community, alternative and underground arts organizations. Some felt that arts funders should put more money directly in the hands of presenters, so that they can take programming risks with emerging artists. Others felt that artists themselves should remain the main priority for funders. Some participants noted that arts funders should devote more resources towards disabled artists and to facilitating attendance among disabled audiences by funding better infrastructure in spaces and venues.



## 8) Saskatchewan

### Overview

The Saskatchewan session was held on June 14 at The Refinery in Saskatoon. It was co-hosted by the Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB) and the Canada Council. Fourteen participants attended the session, representing a range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, visible minority, rural and isolated communities. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the consultations.

### Economic Sustainability

Like participants in other sessions, Saskatchewan attendees described feeling “burnt out” due to the financial pressures of working in the arts sector. Artists said they support themselves through funding bodies (especially the Saskatchewan Arts Board) and employment in “money making” industries. Many participants noted that Saskatchewan artists are often called upon to donate work for fundraising efforts for the arts sector and for other types of charities. While participants say they feel good about contributing to the community, they wonder if this type of activity results in a devaluation of their work.

Arts professionals noted that while they do benefit from more stable employment than do most artists, they are over-worked and must devote long hours to ensure that basic work gets done. Many noted that despite having some stable funding from arts funders and social service agencies, a significant portion of their time is devoted to fundraising in Saskatchewan’s private sector, thus leaving less time for curatorial aspects of their work.

### Retaining Saskatchewan Artists

The issue of retaining Saskatchewan artists, particularly those located in rural and isolated communities, was of special importance to many participants. Some spoke of how the province’s arts community is continually depleted by the departure of artists who pursue career opportunities outside the province. Many noted that it is critical for Saskatchewan to address this issue, since it affects not only the province’s artistic practitioners, but also the province’s economic and cultural development.

### Audience Development

As in Alberta, many participants were eager to showcase Saskatchewan’s art scene as a way of dispelling stereotypes other Canadians have about the province. Despite community pride, many felt that the general population in Saskatchewan is not particularly interested in or engaged with arts activities, and this perception is the main barrier for audience development. Some participants felt that artists and arts communities are actively scorned by the general population because they are not perceived to be “valuable” to society at large. Some participants noted that artists who produce challenging work or work in uncommercial disciplines face enormous struggles in finding audiences. Some participants felt these issues could

be overcome by better arts education in schools. Others felt that arts communities have been damaged by the critical media attention that certain inflammatory or controversial projects have drawn, and that artists have a responsibility to better explain the difficult aspects of their work. One participant noted that Saskatchewan arts practitioners need to develop a cohesive study of arts participation and an advocacy strategy for the arts to help document the role they play in the province's social, cultural and economic life.

Professional Development, Mentorship and Residencies

Many Saskatchewan participants were especially concerned with issues related to professional development and mentorship. Participants felt that they could overcome a variety of barriers in their careers with better access to mentors, both within and beyond their disciplines. Some noted that existing mentorship programming exists through arts service organizations like the Canadian Artists Representation/Le front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC), but that these opportunities could be expanded. Arts professionals noted they could benefit from mentorship in the business service sector, particularly in the areas of organization, accounting and financial management. Due to limited resources and lack of access to mentors from within the province, many attendees felt their mentorship opportunities were limited in Saskatchewan.

Some participants noted that the province's arts community could benefit from more residency arrangements, particularly artists from outside the province. Participants who had experience working with or mentoring under visiting artists spoke highly of the experience, and felt that expanded access to these types of arrangements would be beneficial to the Saskatchewan arts community at large.

Relationship to Funders

Most participants said they had a much closer relationship to the Saskatchewan Arts Board than with the Canada Council. Most attribute this to the fact that the SAB's consultants are far more likely to be seen attending events, conducting outreach activities and counseling artists. Many participants say they know little about how equitably the Canada Council distributes funds across all of Canada's regions – as a result, they tend to assume that most money is directed at major urban centres. Other participants said that Canada Council grants appear to be intimidating to apply for, and therefore not worth the return on the investment of time and resources. Participants said that the Canada Council could benefit from more outreach activities, both on the part of its officers and its board members.



## 9) **Yukon and Northwest Territories**

### Overview

The Yukon session was held on June 7 at the Old Firehall in Whitehorse. It was co-hosted by the Arts Section of the Government of Yukon's Cultural Services Branch, the Community Program of the Northwest Territories' Culture and Heritage Branch and the Canada Council. Thirteen participants attended the session, representing a range of disciplines, levels of experience and demographic backgrounds as well as gender. Particular attention was paid to inviting participants from Aboriginal, rural and isolated communities. Participants from Nunavut and from more remote regions of the Yukon and NWT were invited but were unable to attend due to logistical difficulties. The following represents a summary of the key issues raised during the session.

### Economic Sustainability

As was the case with participants in other provinces, Yukon and N.W.T.-based artists noted that they are in the stage of their careers where they are making sacrifices in terms of time and money to establish their practices. Participants noted that working in the Northern arts sector poses a unique set of challenges, but also offers some valuable opportunities. Many noted that the cost of living is extremely high, especially in the N.W.T., a problem which can be exacerbated in communities that lack stable and financially supportive audiences. While some participants subsidize their creative work by juggling "non-art" jobs, others said that, particularly in Whitehorse and Dawson City, they benefit from a close-knit and loyal arts community and strong support from the Yukon government.

Participants from N.W.T and from rural and isolated communities said that they face more onerous challenges in supporting their practices and organizations, due to isolation, small audiences, lack of respect for the arts and lack of infrastructure to support creation. As a result, some artists and arts professionals from N.W.T. said that many artists and arts professionals migrate to the Yukon to pursue the opportunities the territory has to offer – this, in turn, depletes N.W.T. of key stakeholders in its arts communities. Similarly, Aboriginal participants from isolated communities felt their practices were not sustainable in their communities, but were reluctant to move to urban areas for fear of being dislocated from the cultures that inform their creative work.

### Audience Development

While many participants felt that their practices are appreciated and recognized within their local communities, there are significant differences between audiences in each community. Some participants noted that recent advances in technology have enabled mainstream media to reach previously isolated communities. Some participants worried that non-commercial art practices are not reaching those same communities, and that Northern arts practitioners have a duty to ensure that broader perspectives on art and culture also reach these areas.

Many participants, particularly those from rural and isolated communities in N.W.T., felt there is a lack of appreciation for the contribution arts make. Many participants

felt a strong pull to share their work with audiences outside their immediate surroundings. For many participants, the primary goal for audience development was to engage with potential audiences in southern Canada. Some, however, noted that they feel a strong connection with a “Northern” identity, one which encompasses communities in the Yukon, N.W.T. and Nunavut. Despite this connection, many participants noted that reaching audiences across the north is quite difficult, due to the cost of transportation.

Technology

Some participants felt technology will play a role in their future careers. Some noted that there is an impression in the North that projects that are immersed in and incorporate technology are more successful than traditional or non-technology-based forms, especially in terms of audiences. Many artists had some success in exposing their work to larger audiences through web sites. Some who had access to Internet connections noted that this access has helped them remain in their communities, while marketing their work and networking with mentors and other artists. Others, however, noted that Internet access and expertise varies from community to community, and that much work needs to be done in building the capacity of Northern artists and arts administrators in on-line technology, particularly in Aboriginal communities

Northern Identity

Many participants spoke about the role of the arts in building and reflecting a distinct Northern identity. Some participants want to play a role in counteracting reductive stereotypes about Northern life, particularly those rooted in the region’s history. Many participants noted that the economy in the Yukon and Northwest Territories is rapidly growing, resulting in unique pressures on the social, cultural and economic infrastructure. Northern arts practitioners spoke of wanting to be an integral part of transformations currently taking place.

All participants were concerned that there was no representation from Nunavut and limited representation from more remote communities. They stressed that ensuring greater participation from artists in those communities is of critical importance to the growth of the arts in the North and that funders need to make additional efforts to address this.

Relationship to Funders

Most participants said they felt a connection to the arts funding sections of the Yukon and N.W.T. governments. Yukon participants noted that officers working for the territorial arts funders were active in their communities, conducting outreach, face-to-face mentorship and attending arts events. Yukon participants also noted that the territorial government is flexible with how it delivers funds to artists and arts organizations. N.W.T participants had similar comments, but noted that their territorial government does not invest as much money in its arts communities as in the Yukon.



Most participants said they felt little connection to the Canada Council. In general, arts communities feel that the Council does not recognize the unique realities of Northern arts practitioners, and thus design funding criteria that Northern applicants simply cannot meet. Participants in N.W.T. noted that there is a perception that the Canada Council does not generally support artists in the N.W.T., possibly because more artists work in traditional or craft-based practices. Participants discussed the challenges around literacy issues in the North and were interested in the creation of more flexible application options (such as oral presentations) to increase access and success rates. Some attendees, particularly those working in popular or traditional practices said they felt the Canada Council was devoted more to "fine art" practices than to "folk art." Several participants also noted that urban music is not supported by the Canada Council, in contrast to Yukon and N.W.T. arts funders. As a result, musical forms that exist between commercial and experimental forms are not supported. Several participants felt that applicants had to have "insider expertise" about applying for funding through the Council, in terms of knowing who to call to get advice, and what to write in applications.

Some participants noted, however, that the Canada Council's website contains many resources that would be of value to Northern artists, particularly contact information for presenters, venues and arts organizations. Participants felt the Canada Council could improve its visibility among Northern artists by conducting more outreach activities in their communities and by ensuring that its promotional materials are more culturally sensitive and meaningful to the North.



## 5.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Next Generation of Artistic Leaders Dialogues revealed a dynamic, diverse and motivated generation of artists and arts professionals who seek meaningful engagement with institutions, audiences, fellow artists, and society at large. Participants generally agreed that young and emerging arts practitioners represent a distinct community and that arts funders need to do more to understand the attitudes and pressures they face-- although many noted that the Dialogues were an encouraging sign that they were being listened to. The Steering Committee for the Next Generation of Artistic Leaders Dialogues asked D-Code to provide recommendations on the broad strategic directions arts funders may consider exploring in future efforts to engage this group.

### a. Life Stages

Youth is not a homogenous state, though it is commonly understood as such by institutions that seek to engage with younger people. Between the ages of 18 and 30, young people undergo a series of transitions in areas ranging from where they live, how they support themselves and who they relate to. Many arts practitioners spoke of the transitions they have experienced and those they anticipate in the next few years of their careers and their personal lives.

There was a widespread perception that key transitions are under-served by many arts funders, particularly around the "emerging" stages. As noted earlier, the bulk of these concerns are related to program criteria that force artists to demonstrate a level of achievement or experience before being allowed to compete against more established artists – this was of concern for younger participants at the earliest stages of their careers. Among participants who were approaching their late 20s, concerns about social safety nets, pensions, juggling multiple responsibilities, savings and transitional career training were more evident, demonstrating an anxiety about what the future will hold.

Arts funders can build stronger relationships with young arts practitioners, and demonstrate through their programs and support offerings that they recognize the differing realities facing young artists. This could be done by re-thinking some funding criteria. It also might be reflected in the development of different support tools or structures for artists at different stages of their lives.

### b. Relationships

The nature of relationships between arts practitioners and arts funders is worth consideration. Under most current arts funder models, the relationship is mostly transactional - applicants apply for funding and arts funders oversee the processes involved in disbursing funds. As noted earlier, participants had a wide variety of ideas for improving how these processes are carried out.

Participants spoke of a strong desire for a deeper connection with arts funders. When participants said they felt a connection, it was often because they had a relationship that involved much more than simply applying for funding. Some participants described mentorship-type relationships with program officers, who not only guided them through application processes, but offered career advice, referrals to other government services

*"I spend a lot of time fighting for emerging artists, going to lots of conferences that are dominated by established artists. We need to state that we are emerging, we are professional, we are sophisticated, we're enthusiastic... and not naïve." – Atlantic session*

and collegial support. Many frustrations that arts practitioners have with arts funders are related to their perceived inability to establish these kinds of connections with program officers.

This means that in the future, arts funding bodies will need to do more to demonstrate their commitment and involvement in arts communities. As institutions, arts funders may want to reposition themselves not only as sources of funding, but also as a source for a broad array of support services, including mentorship, research, and referral. This may have implications in outreach materials and employee roles.

In addition, participants want to engage with arts funder organizations and bring them into the community that they feel personally invested in. Many are actively interested in becoming jurors. Others say they would volunteer time to explore category development, policy directions and program design. This willingness to contribute to arts funders represents a desire for a more meaningful relationship.

c. Entrepreneurial Spirit

Many participants spoke of entrepreneurial models when discussing their long-range career plans. The goal for many participants is to be entirely reliant on economic income generated through their practices, and reliance on support from arts funders is often seen as a "first step" towards this goal. Becoming self-reliant not only means professional validation but the freedom to explore their own personal visions without having to fit into existing program criteria. Even among participants who said they do not realistically feel they will be able to sustain themselves solely from creative work, entrepreneurial skills are highly prized, as it is imagined that they will help lessen the economic pressures they currently face. Business skills are also highly valued by arts administrators who often say they feel under-equipped to manage financial issues they face in their jobs. Flexibility in eligible project costs, allowances for capital investments, grants for business training, and workshops on the "business of art" were only some of the key needs identified by participants. Recognizing this entrepreneurial desire will be an important challenge for arts funders, many of whom currently focus their efforts and resources towards supporting artistic creation and organizational infrastructure.

d. Multiplicity

The Next Generation of Artistic Leaders Dialogues showed that young artists and arts professionals wear many hats: artist, curator, administrator, educator, small business manager, arts volunteer, community leader and technical support worker. Young arts community members play multiple roles to support themselves and their peers and many believe this is something unique to young and emerging arts practitioners.

In addition, many participants believe that the existing arts infrastructure, which emphasizes specialization, linear career development and clear role delineation, is not reflective of their current reality. Increasingly arts funders will need to recognize that arts practitioners are not solely invested in singular aspects of creative practice or sectoral employment. This is of particular relevance when discussing categorization of practice, eligibility criteria and assessment of artistic achievement with arts funders.

*"There's a changing definition of artist. These days, it's multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted. We are all playing many roles, and arts [funders] need to figure out what this means for us."  
-- Northern Session*



FINAL REPORT

Next Generation  
Dialogues

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## 6.0 NEXT GENERATION OF ARTS AUDIENCES DIALOGUES

### 1) METHODOLOGY

#### a) Objectives:

The Focus Group sessions were intended to gather together a broad spectrum of young people aged 18 to 30 with at least some interest and experience in attending arts and cultural activities. This project was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Gain insight into what current and potential young audiences value about the arts;
- Learn what influences young arts audiences' decisions about which activities they attend and participate in; and
- Assess what young arts attendees see as priorities for public arts funding in the future.

#### b) Recruitment:

Close to 40 participants attended the six focus groups, which were held in Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. Participants for the focus group sessions were recruited by third-party recruiters under Market Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) guidelines governing privacy and protection of personal information.

D-Code worked with the Steering Committee to develop an interview guide for use by recruiters. Potential participants were first asked to identify their level of interest in the arts, and then document their recent experience in attending or participating in arts activities. They were also asked a variety of demographic questions, including household income, level of education, gender and ethno-cultural background.

For each location, recruiters developed a list of participants (with names removed) which was shared with Steering Committee members who, along with D-Code ensured that the list reflected local demographic concerns, Aboriginal participation and a range of experience and interest in attending arts experiences. Between eight and 10 participants were invited to participate in each group.

*Since only two participants attended the Saskatchewan focus group, no substantial information is included from that session.*

#### c) Approach:

As with the consultation sessions, the focus group process was developed by D-Code and overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from

the Canada Council for the Arts and provincial and territorial funding agencies. Each focus group was designed to last approximately 1.5 hours.

1) Perceptions of the Value of Arts

Participants were first asked to provide their commentary on the following key issues:

- How they define “arts” and “cultural” activities;
- Their best and worst arts experiences in recent times;
- The degree to which they believe the arts are necessary for a healthy society and economy;
- How much they make attending and participating in arts experiences a priority in their lives; and
- How much they would be willing to volunteer for or donate money to arts organizations and institutions.

2) Arts Participation Barriers

Participants were then asked to compare and contrast different arts experiences and discuss the degree to which they would feel comfortable attending them. Moderators prompted participants to discuss underlying beliefs and attitudes about specific kinds of arts activities with an emphasis on exploring different perceptions of the following forms:

- Classical/ traditional works and new/ emerging works
- Community/ social arts experiences and solitary experiences
- Popular and “experimental” forms

In addition, participants were asked about what influences their perceptions of the arts and specific arts activities. D-Code facilitators probed the role that friends, family, education and critical debate/ opinion play.

3) Role of Government in Arts

Focus group participants were first asked to describe their level of awareness of current arts funders and their role in supporting arts activities in their communities. Participants were then asked to describe what role different levels of government should be playing in supporting artists and in helping ensure that Canada is recognized as a leader in arts.



**2) KEY THEMES**

*a. Arts as essential to community identity*

Most participants in the Focus Group sessions said they believed that the arts play a role in how they relate to their own communities. For some participants, this was expressed in terms of local pride, as many participants felt that the arts help them describe their communities to others. Participants in Edmonton, for example said they were proud that the city was recently awarded the Cultural Capital of Canada for the year 2007 by the federal government, and hoped that the distinction would help dispel stereotypes that other Canadians have about the city or about Alberta.

For others, particularly those from new Canadian communities, the arts were described in terms of community festivals, which are vital to helping diverse communities share their cultural histories and practices.

A small number of participants noted that arts play a role in challenging social norms, thereby contributing to public debate on social and moral issues. A small number of participants noted that art helps give voice to marginalized communities and constituencies in society.

*b. Arts as essential to quality of life*

Many participants said they were able to identify how the arts contribute to the quality of life in their community. For some, this was primarily described in terms of personal and emotional benefits, including:

- Pleasurable and entertaining experiences
- Stimulating creativity in other aspects of life
- Creating outlets for personal expression

Other participants noted that arts contribute directly to the local economy in direct, tangible ways:

- Attracting tourists
- Creating jobs in businesses associated with the arts experience (bars, restaurants, etc.)
- Encouraging people to spend money in their own communities

For some participants, particularly those in Edmonton and Halifax, participants noted that the arts are essential to helping attract and retain new residents.

Some participants, however, were unwilling to make a direct connection between arts and the quality of life of their communities. For these participants,

*"What about Alberta? Every province needs to define its cultural background... It's very important to show our true colours... so people don't just think we're all the same stereotype." -- Edmonton participant*

*« C'est une mode de 'langage' pour les personnes handicapées. » -- Montreal participant*

*"Take out arts and culture and we don't have anything but the will to survive?" -- Edmonton participant*

*« On prend l'exemple des festivals, il y a beaucoup de touristes. Il y a aussi de nouvel argent qui rentre dans la ville. » -- Montreal participant*



arts are often described as luxuries, which, while certainly valuable, are not vital to a community's health.

#### Personal Benefit of Arts Participation

How participants described what they appreciate and recognize in arts experiences varied greatly. Most participants described the arts experience as a form of entertainment, relaxation and enjoyment and their experience of the work is primarily built on an appreciation of the craft or expertise of the artist(s). Some participants say they struggle with how to appreciate these attributes for certain forms. Some reported feeling initial trepidation when approaching new and different experiences, but that this trepidation can be overcome.

For some participants the notion of communicating ideas is more important to how they appreciate an arts activity. The experiences they remember are ones where they recall feeling challenged, surprised or exposed to something unique and unexpected.

When asked to describe frustrating arts experiences, participants described ones where they could either not appreciate the craft of skill behind the creation, or where they could not discern the ideas being communicated. Some participants described having negative reactions around "modern art" and often describe it as being "alienating," "untalented" or "unlike art."

#### c. Social Aspect of Arts is a Prime Incentive for Participation

For most participants, the social aspect of participation in the arts was the key driver. Most participants say they rely on advice from their friends when making decisions about which arts experiences to attend. Some participants described attending events where a friend or family member was a creator or performer. When asked to describe how they attend arts experiences, few participants described attending one on their own.

In terms of the experience, arts attendance was primarily described as a social event. While participants said they had vivid memories of the work, the social element was vital to their discussion and appreciation of the experience. Some participants noted that attending an arts event with a friend or family member creates a space where they can feel comfortable criticizing or dismissing the work. For these reasons, most participants said they see arts primarily in community contexts, as exemplified in public arts festivals.

For most participants, critical discourse in mainstream or specialized arts media is not a factor in how they decide which experiences they will attend. Most said they feel opinions about arts were rooted in personal preferences and that they did not trust critics to accurately predict or guide their own decision-making processes. Some noted that critics are, by necessity, already interested in various genres and formats of arts. Few participants said they searched out on-line criticism or commentary, other than for advice about films and popular music.

*"Once I got a free ticket [to the ballet] and was hesitant but I went... I'd go again...and would pay... It was totally different than what I thought. I think if more people had that first step, they would go but they don't. "*  
-- Vancouver participant

*« [La pire expérience artistique], C'est quand l'artiste ne rejoint pas son public. Pour que ce soit un prestation unique. » -- Montreal participant*

*« Moi c'est que personne ne vient avec moi. Je n'aime pas ça aller voir quelque chose seule et de ne pas pouvoir en parler avec quelqu'un. » -- Montreal participant*

*"[Critics] are probably already interested in that stuff, so I don't think they'd know what I want to see." -- Saskatoon participant*

Some noted that arts and culture, along with sports, remains one of the few truly “public activities” that people participate in with other people. Some participants compared the arts with the influence of pop culture, and said they worried that individuals in society were becoming increasingly insular and withdrawn from the world around them.

Some participants say they see arts attendance in the broader context of how they spend their free time and free money. As a result, some participants say that arts experiences compete against other leisure activities, such as going for inner or attending sports events, for their free time.

d. *Certain Forms and Experiences are Perceived as Inaccessible/ Unwelcoming*

Personal comfort was often described by participants as a prime issue in assessing their arts experiences. Many participants said that certain arts experiences were considered intimidating. For many participants, the barriers to participating in these activities were usually related to lack of awareness or exposure to the disciplines. Participants described feeling unknowledgeable about a variety of experiences, including private art gallery attendance, orchestral concerts, classical plays and literary readings.

When asked to describe what prevented them from attending, some participants said they assume that they need to have a certain type of education to understand them. Participants often described being confused with what they often called “modern art” – works that are not easily understood or read by the viewer. When asked what could be done to entice them to participate in these types of experiences, few participants expressed an interest.

e. *Concerns About Lack of Arts in Education*

Most participants expressed concern about the lack of support for arts in education. Many participants cited media reports that described the holistic benefits of arts education for children as they grow. Others noted the value of arts education for children from marginalized communities. Many participants said they felt that many children in Canada suffer from what they said is a diminished emphasis on arts in school education. Most participants said they strongly believed that governments should do more to fund these activities in school systems, not only as a way of educating young people about the arts, but also to create more artists.

f. *Strong Support for Government Role in Arts Funding, but Realization There are Competing Priorities.*

While many participants were aware of the Canada Council as well as local and provincial arts funders, few participants were aware of what kinds of activities the funders support and how they work. Many participants said they could not recall knowing that arts funders in their communities supported the types of events and experiences they attend.

*“I don’t know what I’d do at [a private gallery]. I would totally feel out of place and I don’t think I’d know how to feel about the paintings.” -- Toronto participant*

When weighed against other needs (social services, recreation, lower taxes, health care), many participants believed that society does not appreciate the larger role that arts scenes play. As a result, some participants say they feel Canadians are less likely to see the benefits of increasing budgets for government arts funders.

g. Some Support for Government Role in Capacity Building, Exporting and Explaining Canadian Arts

Some participants had general suggestions for what roles arts funders and government as a whole should play. While many participants said they supported giving grants directly to new and emerging artists, most participants felt that government should support initiatives that allow Canadian artists and arts organizations to become self-sustaining.

Across the country, several participants said they felt that government should be supporting Canadian artists and arts organizations in finding larger international audiences, thereby contributing to how the world sees Canada. This too was in line with what many arts practitioners felt.

Overall few participants said they had a clear knowledge about what various arts funders do and the roles they play in supporting arts in Canada. Some participants had no knowledge whatsoever of either the Canada Council or the provincial/ municipal arts funder in their province.

*"[I think arts funders] should help the local artists to develop the skills they need to make it. There are a lot of artists but they need help establishing themselves." -- Halifax Participant*

*"[I think} there should be more sponsorship of people who are traveling internationally to show off Canada.... Because artists are the ones who present who we are and help fight stereotypes about us." -- Toronto participant*

3) **COMPARISON OF ARTISTIC LEADERS AND ARTS AUDIENCES**

*Similarities*

- **Both artistic leaders and arts audiences valued the importance of the arts for quality of life, economic development and education.** Both groups were able to articulate the broad benefits of arts in their communities in terms of establishing and defining community identities.
- **Both artistic leaders and arts audiences were worried about the declining support for art in childhood education and supported measures to increase arts spending in education.** Artistic leaders said they believe increasing artistic education budgets was vital to building future arts audiences. Audiences, however, were more likely to describe benefits outside of audience development, such as links between arts education and early childhood development or links between community arts and social development.
- **Both artistic leaders and arts audiences described valuing arts experiences that present multiple works across multiple disciplines under a common umbrella.** Artistic leaders felt that curated shows and public arts festivals are good ways to expose new audiences to challenging works and larger numbers of creators. Arts audiences described being more interested in experiences that foster social and community interaction, as opposed to discipline-specific experiences.



- **Both artistic leaders and arts audiences felt that governments should support increased international exposure for Canadian artists.** Participants believed that artists play an important role in shaping how Canada is perceived internationally, and many of the achievements of Canadian artists are a source of pride for both arts practitioners and arts audiences. Many participants also felt that establishing international audiences and presences for artists was vital to the long-term economic health of Canadian arts communities.

*Differences and Gaps*

- **Some artistic leaders and most arts audiences said that some contemporary arts experiences are poorly understood and perceived as alienating by many arts audiences.** There is debate among artistic leaders and arts audiences as to whether this gap can be addressed by investing more resources into dissemination and discussion of artistic practices. Some participants were curious about how to read and appreciate certain disciplines. Others, however, who said they were not interested in certain forms did not picture themselves being interested arts education. Audiences are more likely to describe feeling that some contemporary works are created with the purpose of alienating general public arts audiences. Artistic leaders expressed the belief that more critical thought would stimulate greater engagement but audiences expressed a feeling of mistrust around some criticism.
- **Some artistic leaders are worried about feeling pressure to dilute artistic practices as a way of increasing arts audiences.** Many artistic leaders say that while they feel it is important for artists to engage with broader audiences, they generally believe that this should not come at the expense of artistic quality. Arts audiences are less worried about this issue, perhaps because they do not see the dilution process taking place. Many feel that the successful arts experiences are those that speak to universal truths.
- **Most arts audiences and some artists did not discuss artistic experiences in ways that demonstrated they distinguish between commercial and non-commercial forms of artistic expression.** Musicals, television programs, popular dance concerts and pop concerts were often discussed as artistic experiences, and participant attachments to these experiences were similar to those had with non-commercial forms. As such, some participants, particularly artistic leaders, are confused by the fact that many commercial art forms and practices are not supported by arts funders.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The *Next Generation of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audience Dialogues* represented a unique opportunity for arts funders to gauge some of the key issues facing new and emerging arts professionals and arts audiences. Both groups are aware that the climate for the arts in Canada is changing. Many are concerned that Canadians are increasingly placing less value on the arts, as is evidenced by the perceived decline in arts in childhood education, attendance for arts events and amounts of time and money available for artistic experiences. Arts funders seeking to engage young Canadians need to recognize this widespread anxiety and seek ways to support experiences that dispel or work against this trend.

Contrary to popular stereotypes about disaffected and disengaged youth, participants demonstrated a willingness to contribute, a strong sense of shared community and a curiosity about unknown and challenging artistic forms and practices. Most participants were grateful for the opportunity to debate and discuss not only issues related to arts funding, but the nature and value of the arts in Canadian society. Artistic leaders are curious about how arts funders operate and are eager to provide advice and contribute to the continued relevance and importance of arts funding bodies. Arts audiences often describe being open to participating in new experiences, provided presenters have made a special effort to remove the barriers associated with certain forms and disciplines.

This report points funders in broad strategic directions towards specific solutions for engaging both arts practitioners and arts audiences.

### NEXT STEPS

This report will be distributed to participants and publicly released in fall of 2007 as a resource for arts funders and other stakeholders in the arts community. It will inform the deliberations of the various arts funders across the country as they embark upon strategic planning, program review, evaluation and other policy initiatives.

The Canadian Public Arts Funders network will be considering the findings of the report at their annual meeting in November 2007, which is focused on the next generation of artistic leaders.



## Appendix A: Key Quotations

### 1) Alberta

#### a. Artistic Leaders

*"Arts can build smaller communities. If you want doctors, you need to have arts."*

#### b. Arts Audiences

*"What about Alberta? Every province needs to define its cultural background... it's very important to show our true colours... So people don't just think we're all the same stereotype."*

*"Take out arts and culture and we don't have anything but the will to survive?"*

### 2) British Columbia

#### a. Artistic Leaders

*"I think [arts funders] need to rethink the balance between funding old and new."*

#### b. Arts Audiences

*"Once I got a free ticket [to the ballet] and was hesitant but I went... I'd go again...and would pay... It was totally different than what I thought. I think if more people had that first step, they would go but they don't."*

### 3) Manitoba

#### a. Artistic Leaders

*"People have criticized artists for "taking" taxpayers money. This means that for artists ... we need to create art that helps other areas of the community."*

### 4) Newfoundland & Labrador

#### a. Artistic Leaders

*"We've lost the support of our audiences, where did it go? Why? How can we bring it back?"*

*"A healthy cultural community needs healthy criticism, we need permission to be more critical of ourselves so that we can build the quality of our core work to build broader support."*

### 5) Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island

#### a. Artistic Leaders

*"There's lots out there, there's lots of programs.... We don't want more bureaucracy, just clarity."*

*"I spend a lot of time fighting for emerging artists, going to lots of conferences that are dominated by established artists. We need to state that we are emerging, we are professional, we are sophisticated, we're enthusiastic... and not naïve."*

b. Arts Audiences

*"[I think arts funders] should help the local artists to develop the skills they need to make it. There are a lot of artists but they need help establishing themselves."*

**6) Ontario**

a. Artistic Leaders

*"I'm not sure I understand why [the Canada Council] supports "spoken word with music" and not "hip-hop."*

*"[In an isolated community] access to things like cables and technical stuff is a problem. So we have to rent things from, say Sudbury... and it's pretty expensive." – Ontario Session*

b. Arts Audiences

*"I think of things like Caribana... and it's just a great way for our community to show off our personality to the rest of the city."*

*"I don't know what I'd do at [a private gallery]. I would totally feel out of place and I don't think I'd know how to feel about the paintings."*

*"[I think] there should be more sponsorship of people who are traveling internationally to show off Canada... Because artists are the ones who present who we are and help fight stereotypes about us."*

**7) Quebec**

a. Artistic Leaders

*« Les artistes ont une responsabilité d'investir localement – acheter, connecter avec la communauté. »*

*« Il faut toujours reconstruire les ponts à l'émergence, toujours en mouvement. »*

b. Arts Audiences

*« C'est une mode de 'language' pour les personnes handicapées. »*

*« On prend l'exemple des festivals, il y a beaucoup de touristes. Il y a aussi de nouvel argent qui rentre dans la ville. »*

*« [La pire expérience artistique], C'est quand l'artiste ne rejoint pas son public. Pour que ce soit un prestation unique. »*

*« Moi c'est que personne ne vient avec moi. Je n'aime pas ça aller voir quelque chose seule et de ne pas pouvoir en parler avec quelqu'un. »*

**8) Saskatchewan**

a. Artistic Leaders

*"You really need to feel like you are in a strong network to feel professional, because it's hard to feel like you are an artist in general society."*

b. Arts Audiences

*"[Critics] are probably already interested in that stuff, so I don't think they'd know what I want to see."*

**9) Yukon and Northwest Territories**

a. Artistic Leaders

*"It's important that we discussed the issue of being self-sustaining and not just getting funding."*

*"As a First Nations person, art is a vital part of the culture, the health of a community is shown through the arts."*

*"There's a changing definition of artist. These days, it's multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted. We are all playing many roles, and arts [funders] need to figure out what this means for us."*



## Appendix B: Final participant priorities

In each Artistic Leaders session, small groups were asked to generate recommendations for funders and other key arts stakeholders to address the issues raised in the sessions. Each group was then asked to vote on the top three ideas that were most important for their practices. Not all recommendations were directed at the practices of arts funders. The following is a summary of the notes taken from this stage of the sessions.

### Alberta Session

#### Group 1

1. Increased support artists on the "business" side of the arts through more information packages, links to other departments that offer help and training and more collaboration between arts organizations to share resources.
2. Arts funders should provide more feedback about the selection process for grants.
3. Arts funders should offer more support for international activities such as travel, audience development, tax breaks and residencies.

#### Group 2

1. Establish a co-op to share resources and provide help artists with business matters.
2. Increase representation of arts funders in rural areas. Possible options for this could include: regional offices, workshops in smaller communities, and opportunities for face-to-face interaction with program officers.
3. The Canada Council should undertake a national web site similar to Myspace for young artists.

#### Group 3

1. Arts funders should offer more grant writing workshops or trade shows where other federal and provincial departments could highlight their programs and training assistance.
2. Arts funders should create a separate system or pool for first-time applicants. First-time applicants should be assessed by a jury of emerging artists.
3. There is a general need more venues for presentation and sharing.

### British Columbia Session

#### Group 1

1. Raise the profile of the arts through a large scale advertising campaign.
2. Arts funders should review and change the categories of funding every 5 years to ensure they are still relevant, with an eye to increasing interdisciplinary funding.
3. Arts funders should support activities that encourage and ensure work can be taken internationally.
4. Arts funders should have major funding bodies consolidate requirements to reduce duplication.

#### Group 2

1. Arts funders should support the establishment of an artist management skills program.

2. Arts funders should create a funding body exclusively for emerging/transitional artists.
3. There is a need to "tighten" artistic communities by fostering more cross-pollination. This can be achieved through more multidisciplinary events and mentorship programs.

### **Manitoba Session**

#### Group 1

1. Arts funders should increase accessibility through grant writing workshops.
2. Arts funders should provide more funding for individual artists instead of project grants.
3. Arts funders need to recognize emerging artists as a separate group.
4. Arts funders should consider developing an international artists' swap program to help them broaden their experience.

#### Group 2

1. Arts funders should provide marketing support to artists.
2. Arts funders should create or expand collaborations grants which go across disciplines.
3. Arts funders should provide more support for new and emerging arts organizations to support new forms and new organizations that have come out in recent years.

#### Group 3

1. Provide better access for artists to health/ social safety net benefits.
2. Arts funders should offer proposal-writing workshops and offer other mediums in which to apply other than the written form.
3. Arts funders need to make it easier to get your first-time grant, as this helps build the relationship between funding bodies and artists.
4. Arts funders should ensure that grant timing corresponds to artists' needs.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Session**

#### Group 1

1. The Canada Council needs more provincial representation, perhaps with actual regional offices.
2. Arts funders should support more cultural exchanges and create more funding streams for non-traditional work in Newfoundland.
3. Arts funders could create a mentorship program which would provide seed money for emerging artists to develop built-in paid mentorships

#### Group 2

1. Arts funders need to do more to ease artists into the application process. This could be achieved by providing assistance for artists writing grants, mock juries, jury shadowing, constructive.
2. Establish an "Arts Admin SWAT team" – a centralized administration service that can be hired by small organizations on a one off basis, including for grant preparation. This should be made an eligible expense when applying for arts funding.
3. Arts funding bodies should support annual gatherings of an art form or a theme that brings people together once a year to exchange and grow.

### **Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island Session**



## FINAL REPORT

### Group 1

1. Increase training and support for artists to learn entrepreneurship skills.
2. Increase regional support by creating "regional funding envelopes", or by providing assistance to heighten the quality of applications.
3. Greater transparency in funding process which could include better feedback from juries (a report card) and clarified terminology in applications.

### Group 2

1. Establish an artist-in-residence program in each province.
2. Arts funders need to stop lumping Atlantic provinces together. Each has its own distinct culture.
3. To develop awareness and appreciation of arts in schools, schools could dedicate an hour every week for an arts assembly. This assembly could involve bringing artists to schools to talk about their practices.

### Group 3

1. Develop arts in education and more opportunities for well-paid, trained artists-in-residence to work in educational institutions.
2. Arts funders could create a centralized web site for artists to promote their work – make it free and user-friendly and have national and local sections.
3. Participants expressed a need for a French-language cultural TV program for the Maritimes.

## **Ontario Session**

### Group 1

1. Participants wanted a mentorship program as well as directory of potential mentors. It was also suggested that the mentor receive funding and that the younger artists could get assistance in finding a mentor.
2. Consider a redistribution of funds to emerging artists and emerging arts organizations from the more established artists and organizations.
3. Increase understanding of new art forms and genres by the artists themselves.

### Group 2

1. Arts funders should support an arts camp -- a week long event which included mentorship, communications, and events like the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary dialogues. Arts camps could help establish connections between established artists and students.
2. Emergency funds to expand grants to cover equipment costs or unforeseen costs relating to the creation of the work are required.
3. The Canada Council should bring back its emerging artist programs.

### Group 3

1. Arts funders should offer opportunities for artists to apply for multi-year funding.
2. Arts funders should work together to harmonize grant applications (at all three levels of government).
3. Better recognition of the unique funding needs of francophone artists outside of Quebec.

## **Quebec Session**

### Group 1



## FINAL REPORT

1. Organizational funding should shift to smaller, more alternative organizations.
2. Create a better social safety net for artists including a pension fund.
3. Arts funders should facilitate raising private fundraising for the arts.

### Group 2

1. Arts funders should help presenters to better support emerging artists through promotional activities. There is also a need to find a way for more presenters and artist-run centres to buy the buildings they occupy.
2. Develop more international partnerships to facilitate exchanges, and arts funders should support these activities more.
3. Arts funders should allow two grant requests per year.
4. Increase accessibility for disabled artists and offer better marketing to cultural communities.

### Group 3

1. Establish broader translation grants – not just for books, but for organizations. There is necessary to help artists and arts organizations get their materials out in both English and French.
2. Arts funders should create matching funding programs for artists and organizations who raise private funding.
3. Establish a mentorship program for emerging artists who are unsuccessful with their grant applications. There is also a need for a mentorship program to help the transition from emerging to mid-career.

## **Saskatchewan Session**

### Group 1

1. Stimulate more opportunities to cross-pollinate across the country. Artists should be supported in living in different areas of Canada.
2. There should be no tax on arts grants.
3. While mentorship should be supported, it needs to be appropriate in scope and timing.
4. Continue to hold more events like the Next Generations Dialogues.

### Group 2

1. Augment the number of emerging artists on juries.
2. Increase the funds available through arts funders for mentorship programs.
3. Direct more money towards arts-related workshops in smaller communities.

## **Yukon and Northwest Territories Session**

### Group 1

1. Artists often feel the need to leave small communities because of the lack of opportunities. There need to be more initiatives to help keep artists in small communities, by connecting them to greater opportunities outside their immediate locales.
2. Develop more small business training for artists.
3. Improve the application process; including broadened eligibility criteria, allowance for alternative application methods (oral, video), and more assistance to navigate the process.

### Group 2



FINAL REPORT

1. Arts funders, particularly the Canada Council, need better local outreach in the North.
2. Develop more sensitivity on the part of funders to local realities (i.e. equipment purchase needs in small communities, travel expenses).
3. Arts funders should offer more support to pan-Northern collaborations and exchanges.

