



**Art, now
more than
ever**



2021-26
Strategic Plan

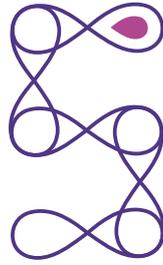
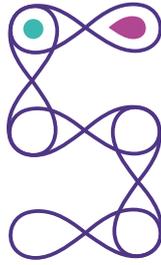


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Mandate

The Canada Council for the Arts contributes to the vibrancy of a creative and diverse arts and literary scene and supports its presence across Canada and around the world. The Council is Canada's public arts funder, with a mandate to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts."

The Council's grants, services, initiatives, prizes, and payments support Canadian artists, authors, and arts groups and organizations. This support allows them to pursue artistic expression, create works of art, and promote and disseminate the arts and literature.

Through its arts funding, communications, research, and promotion activities, the Council fosters the ever-growing engagement of Canadians and international audiences in the arts.

The Council's Public Lending Right (PLR) program makes annual payments to creators whose works are held in Canadian public libraries.

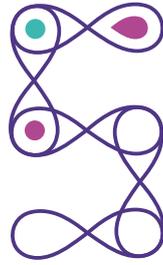
The Council's Art Bank operates art rental programs and helps further public engagement with contemporary arts through exhibition and outreach activities.

The Council is responsible for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, which promotes the values and programs of UNESCO to contribute to a future of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development.



The Algonquin Canoe, 2012, Daniel (Pinock) Smith, birch bark canoe, cedar ribs, cedar paddles. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank.

Photo: Christian Lalonde



Land acknowledgement

The Canada Council for the Arts acknowledges the land on which its offices are located is the unceded, unsundered Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

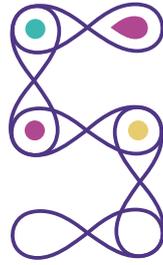
The Council recognizes the Algonquins as the customary keepers and defenders of the Ottawa River Watershed and its tributaries. We honour their long history of welcoming many nations to this beautiful territory and uphold and uplift the voice and values of our host Nation.

Further, the Council respects and affirms the inherent and treaty rights of all Indigenous Peoples across this land. The Council has and will continue to honour the commitments to self-determination and sovereignty we have made to Indigenous Nations and Peoples.

The Council acknowledges the historical oppression of lands, cultures, and the original Peoples in what we now know as Canada and fervently believes the arts contribute to the healing and decolonizing journey we all share.

This land acknowledgement was developed by members of the Algonquin community, and we thank them for their generosity and collaboration.

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Art, now more than ever

This strategic plan was written during a pandemic that will forever change the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. Here in Canada, COVID-19 has profoundly affected thousands of families, leaving many bereaved. Health measures implemented during the pandemic have caused many people to lose their jobs, bankrupted businesses, devastated the physical and mental health of many, and exacerbated existing injustices, including those related to discrimination and exclusion. Vaccination campaigns are giving people hope that life will soon return to normal, but we know that society has been changed by the pandemic—for better and for worse.

Art comes from a hopeful place, and it forges and mends relationships even in a time of crisis. Words, music, the built environment, movement, images—artistic creation in all its forms inspires us to reflect on who we are and the world in which we live. Art entertains us, comforts us, and brings us together. Art nourishes our sense of belonging, strengthening our connections to the wider world, as well as to the many communities to which we belong—by origin, adoption, and aspiration. The power of art endures when everything else falls apart; art is an essential need.

Art and culture have played an important role in people’s daily lives throughout the pandemic, although the arts—like other sectors—have had to suspend many activities. Audiences are still engaging with art, although the opportunities for most artists and cultural workers to practise their craft have dwindled to almost nothing. This situation will not continue indefinitely—the sky clears after even the most destructive storms. We need artists to imagine a new reality now more than ever.

For this to happen, we need an arts sector that is supported, valued, resilient, inclusive, accessible, equitable, and sustainable. We need a sector that is able to create and share artistic and literary experiences, limited only by the imagination. We need a sector that can take better care of its workers and remunerate them adequately.



Rebuilding the sector on a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable foundation

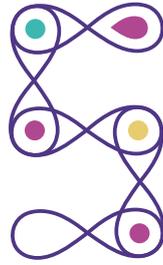
The time has now come to rebuild the arts sector, an essential part of our society, after a long crisis has shaken it to the core.

Rebuilding the sector will require considerable public and private investment, a strong return of pre-pandemic audiences along with the engagement of new ones, and a powerful and unprecedented campaign to increase access to the arts and culture. To engage and retain new audiences, Canadians will need to see themselves reflected in the culture sector's workforce and its creations.

The pandemic has shed a harsh light on the many inequities in our society, in many social systems and sectors of activity. As a result, wider society is working to improve things like health care, supply chains, and education to benefit all people.

Many of the arts sector's shortcomings, inconsistencies, and injustices have also come into sharper focus since the spring of

2020. We now have an increased awareness of systemic barriers that lead to a persistent lack of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the arts, particularly in the workforce and programming of far too many publicly funded organizations. This has limited the participation and advancement of artists from underserved and marginalized groups. This includes artists from Indigenous, Black, racialized, Deaf, disability, and 2SLGBTQ and gender-diverse communities, women, and artists at intersections of these identities. The current lack of equity and inclusion has also hindered the engagement of new audiences and limited the flourishing of organizations in our increasingly diverse society. By becoming more equitable, diverse, and inclusive, the arts sector will generate rich artistic and literary creativity, which it will be better positioned to share with broader audiences.



Other realities contribute to the weaknesses of the arts sector. The arts must challenge the choice of competition over collaboration, fragmentation over resource-sharing, and growth at all costs over sustainable development. To achieve this, the sector must innovate.

Some business models in the arts have reached their limit, and innovative models are needed to create new possibilities. We need creativity to do this, but creativity alone is not enough. Innovation is about both process and outcome. It holds great promise because it can draw on the knowledge and experience of the arts as well as other sectors that have addressed similar challenges. The Council sees innovation as a key to sustainable development in the arts.



A decolonized future for the arts

In the spirit of truth-telling, reconciliation, and decolonization, the Canada Council for the Arts recognizes and seeks to address the history of oppression, exclusion, and anti-Indigenous racism in colonial institutions. The Council recognizes the role it plays in this inequity, and it is committed to acting respectfully, responsibly, and collaboratively as we move forward together towards a more just, equitable, and decolonized future for the arts.



What role will the Canada Council for the Arts play?

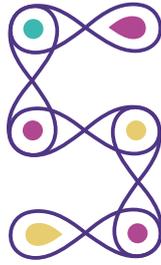
The Council will continue to support the creation and sharing of art in its many forms. It will continue to support organizations of all sizes and structures in their efforts to create and share art, as well as to advocate for the arts and further their democratization. The Council will do this through its grant programs, which recognize the crucial importance of artistic merit. It will also do this through targeted strategic funds, special initiatives, and partnerships.

Ultimately, the Council's *2021–26 Strategic Plan* will encourage the emergence of a sustainable, resilient, and equitable arts sector that is accessible to all people in Canada, a sector in which everyone recognizes themselves and feels welcome. While change is needed to achieve this, the Council also believes that it cannot be imposed. The Council will therefore collaborate with the sector, working with partners to develop the necessary tools for change. It will also put in place clear and transparent incentives and other funding mechanisms to shift its investments to support change—and it will report on its results annually.

The Council will maintain its unwavering support for the renewal and strengthening of the Public Lending Right program. The program provides nearly 18,000 authors, writers, translators, illustrators, narrators, and photographers with annual payments in compensation for the free use of their works in Canadian public libraries.

The Council will also continue to administer Canada's largest portfolio of prizes for artistic and literary excellence, recognizing the significant achievements made by a breadth of creators who shape our collective imagination.

The Council will innovate in its management of the Art Bank to ensure that its works of art are on display in prominent public spaces and workplaces—an important way to broaden public access to the power of art.



The Council will also continue to assume the important responsibility of supporting the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) Secretariat in the spirit of collaboration with the many government bodies and civil society networks it represents. It will optimize the complementarity and synergy between its initiatives and those of the CCUNESCO in support of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development.

Lastly, the Council will continue to offer analysis and recommendations to the federal government through the Minister of Canadian Heritage for the fair, equitable, stable, and predictable funding of the arts in Canada. It will fully assume its responsibilities to support the artistic and cultural development of official language minority communities in close collaboration with organizations that defend their rights. It will also contribute to quantitative and qualitative research and the development of policies, measures, initiatives, and approaches that seek to improve the working conditions and remuneration of artists, as well as access to the arts and culture for all Canadians, regardless of cultural background, region,

or socio-economic status. The Council will also be an active, committed, agile, and responsible partner—both in Canada and abroad—in furthering intersectoral collaboration, promoting the arts, artists, and arts and literary organizations, and in fostering cultural diplomacy.



The intent of the 2021-26 Strategic Plan

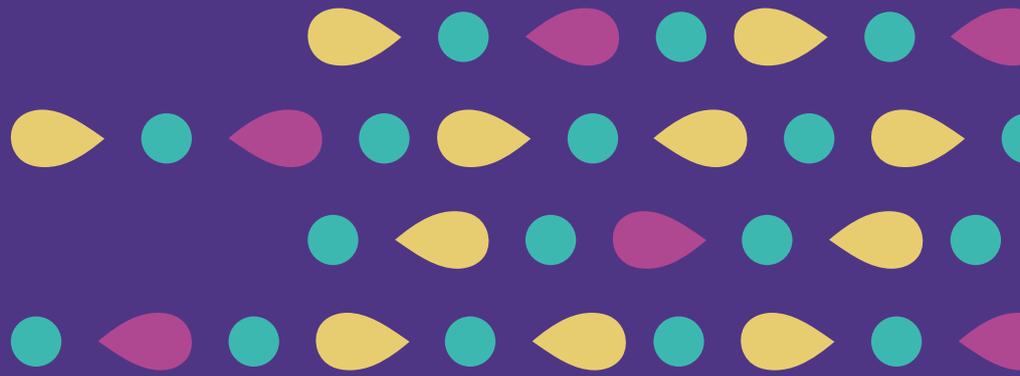
By 2026, people across Canada will have increased access to the arts. The arts sector will have advanced the existing models for creating and sharing the arts, and it will also have created new ones.

Artistic and literary creation will be flourishing, celebrated, and appreciated locally, across Canada, and around the world.

Artists and cultural workers from underserved and marginalized groups will take their rightful place in the arts, and their creations will be more widely presented and celebrated in Canada and on the world stage. Significant progress will have been made in the areas of decolonization, anti-racism, gender equality and parity, and the fight against all forms of discrimination and harassment.

The sector will have found tangible ways of fostering the emergence of new voices, making space for youth and promoting and supporting the leadership of people from underserved and marginalized groups.

Artists, collectives, and arts organizations will play an inspiring, innovative, and exemplary role in our collective development. They will have the means and resources to exercise their social responsibilities and contribute to mitigating the devastating consequences of climate change.



Our directions for 2021-26

- Invest in rebuilding and innovation
- Amplify the benefits of the arts for society
- Nurture and expand collaboration and partnerships



Invest in rebuilding and innovation

The Council will foster an inclusive and sustainable rebuilding of the arts sector across the country. Innovation will be at the centre of that collective journey.



COMMITMENTS THE COUNCIL WILL

- support artistic and literary creation and foster increased access to the arts across Canada.
.....
- invest in a sustainable rebuilding of the arts sector through emergency support and recovery measures.
.....
- improve access to funding for youth, official language minority communities, and historically underserved and marginalized communities, including Indigenous, Black, racialized, Deaf and disability, and 2SLGBTQ and gender-diverse communities, women, and artists at intersections of these groups.
.....
- strengthen its presence, interactions, and support for artistic and literary activity in the North of Canada.
.....
- ensure more equitable access to project funding for artists, arts groups, and organizations in all regions of the country.
.....
- encourage the development of innovative business models and support the ongoing digital transformation.
.....



Amplify the benefits of the arts for society

The arts sector has tremendous potential for contributing to social cohesion, community vitality, and the quality of life of people of all backgrounds and circumstances in Canada. To fully realize this potential, the Council will support the arts sector in its work to eliminate discrimination in all forms, including that based on gender identity, race, and ability, to respond to climate change, and to recognize and promote the role of youth in the arts. It will support efforts to advance Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, as well as the Indigenous-led decolonization of the arts and culture sector. It will champion fair compensation for artistic and literary creation, the economic protection of artists, and equitable access to digital infrastructure and resources for artists and people across Canada.



COMMITMENTS THE COUNCIL WILL

- encourage the arts sector in its efforts to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion, eliminate the consequences of racism and colonization in the arts sector, overturn misogyny and all forms of discrimination against women, advance gender equality, and mitigate the effects of climate change in the context of its activities.
.....
- respect and protect the intellectual property, traditional knowledge, and artistic and cultural expression of Indigenous people and encourage the arts sector to serve as an example in furthering this work.
.....
- champion improved working conditions and financial security for artists and cultural workers, notably in the form of a social safety net.
.....
- promote universal access to digital resources for artists, arts groups, and organizations and audiences, particularly in underserved areas such as the North of Canada.
.....



Nurture and expand collaboration and partnerships

To strengthen the arts sector's capacity to rebuild and innovate, the Council will support collaborations, cross-sectoral partnerships, and renewed cultural diplomacy.



COMMITMENTS THE COUNCIL WILL

- foster cross-sectoral collaboration and the transfer and sharing of knowledge within the arts sector and, more broadly, between the sector and Canadian society.
.....
- engage Canadian and international partners, notably in the field of social innovation, to support and position the arts in post-pandemic reconstruction of the economy, communities, and society.
.....
- strengthen and expand the international presence of artists, arts groups, and organizations from Canada, and increase cultural diplomacy initiatives to advance dialogue and exchanges between cultures. This work will be undertaken on numerous platforms and in ways that seek to mitigate environmental impact.
.....
- strengthen its presence and relationships in the North to meet its unique and varied cultural realities for making and sharing arts and culture.
.....



Monitoring and reporting

The 2021–26 Strategic Plan is aligned with the Council’s mandate and will contribute to vibrant, creative, and diverse artistic and literary practices that engage Canadians, enrich their communities, and are recognized around the world. In the short term, through this plan, the arts sector will be better positioned to recover from the effects of the pandemic, while building back a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable sector in the longer term.

The Council will support this plan with concrete investments. As with its last strategic plan, it will develop a performance measurement framework to track and report on the progress of its commitments. It will measure results by using quantitative and qualitative data, financial and statistical information about Canadian artists and arts organizations, and research studies. The Council will report on the progress of its strategic plan commitments through its annual reports, website, and annual public meetings.



The path forward

The Council's 2021–26 Strategic Plan was shaped by more than two years of conversations and exchanges with artists and arts organizations from across the country, arts funder partners in Canada and abroad, Council staff and Board members, and the general public. This began in the summer of 2019, when staff members travelled to the three territories and the Council increased outreach across the country, and it culminated in the Reimagine the Arts engagement process in 2020.

The Plan is inspired by a strong sense of optimism in the face of challenges—some entrenched, some new, and some still emerging. And above all, it is borne of a conviction that achieving the goal of a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable arts sector that is welcoming to all cannot be achieved in isolation. It can only be realized through strong and growing relationships, ongoing dialogue and exchanges, shared responsibility, and collaboration.

The Council's Strategic Plan is only the first step in this journey. Throughout the coming period, the Council will work to be exemplary in its own activities, striving for continual improvement of its programs, activities, and policies, in line with its mandate and the commitments put forth in the plan.

We need the arts, now more than ever. Over the next five years, the Council will continue to ground its activities in the ongoing conviction that the arts can touch and transform us all. As a public institution, and as a believer of the power of the arts to bring about positive change in society, the Council has an obligation to ensure that the arts connect with as many people as possible.

The Council is eager to embark on this path, together.

Bringing the arts to life



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