Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des arts du Canada

Archipel Research & Consulting

Research on the Value of Public Funding for Indigenous Arts and Cultures

Final Report

Canada Council for the Arts & Archipel Research and Consulting Inc.

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Contents

Acknowledgements

The Canada Council for the Arts acknowledges that our offices, located in Ottawa, are on the unceded, unsurrendered 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 together. This land acknowledgement was developed by members of the Algonquin community, and we thank them for their generosity and collaboration.

We would also like to thank the many participants who shared their invaluable expertise, experiences, and insights through throughout the study. To those who partook in the interviews, focus groups, and surveys from across the country, we give our most sincere appreciation, and hope this report amplifies your voices. Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to the Canada Council of the Arts Indigenous Advisory Council, who provided guidance and support through the research project, in order for this report to be conducted according to Indigenous methodologies.

Executive Summary

This report was developed by Archipel Research and Consulting Inc. as part of a national research study conducted in collaboration with the Canada Council for the Arts (hereafter referred to as the Council) on the importance of arts and culture to Indigenous communities and how they are impacted by public funding.

We connected with Indigenous artists across Canada to better understand how to strengthen relationships between the Council and Indigenous artists, cultural carriers, and communities, and to guide the improvement of access to arts and culture funding.

This report summarizes the findings from interviews, focus groups, and an online survey conducted across Canada from August 2020 to September 2021. Indigenous artists and cultural carriers from twelve regions across Canada were interviewed, participated in focus groups, or completed an online survey to offer input on their understanding of arts and culture, as well as the impact public funding has on Indigenous arts and cultures. Across the research regions, 124 interviews, 15 focus groups with 112 participants, and an online survey with 413 responses were conducted with Indigenous artists, cultural carriers, and Elders.

This report offers an overview of the ways arts and culture play unique and different roles in Indigenous communities and among Indigenous peoples, the role that Indigenous arts organizations play in fostering and supporting Indigenous artists, and the role and the value of funding from the Council and other arts funding agencies in fostering and supporting Indigenous artists. Finally, this report offers recommendations, expressed by participants, as to how the Council and other arts funding agencies can better serve Indigenous artists across Canada. Ultimately, this work offers a path forward for how Indigenous arts and cultures can intersect with efforts of reconciliation and decolonization.

Introduction

As outlined by Ojibwa Elder and Storyteller Nokomis, for many Indigenous people, art is an expression of connection and responsibility to Indigenous culture, ancestors, community, and future generations.

There is a historic and ongoing responsibility of the Canadian government to appropriately fund and support Indigenous artists. This study emerged from a need to better understand the exact intricacies of the ways in which the Canada Council for the Arts should support Indigenous artists, arts groups and organizations, cultural carriers, cultural workers, and communities. As such, the Council, in collaboration with Archipel Research and Consulting Inc., connected with Indigenous artists, cultural carriers, and Elders from across Canada. To undertake this work, Archipel completed one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and a survey.

The overarching purpose of this national research project was to better understand: (a) the importance and role of arts and culture to Indigenous communities; (b) the impact of public funding for Indigenous arts and cultures; (c) ways to strengthen the relationship between Indigenous peoples and public arts funders; and (d) how to improve access to public funding for Indigenous artists, cultural carriers, Elders, and communities. This report was developed by Archipel Research and Consulting Inc. to capture the findings of this national research study.

Methodology

The project employed a qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups that place emphasis on understanding and exploring the experiences of the research participants. This design prioritizes Indigenous research methodologies, which highlight the importance of dialogic, iterative, and storied approaches to research. Margaret Kovach's insights on Indigenous methodologies were vital to this project because they encouraged us to consider Indigenous art and research as more than just basic creative expression or the gathering of knowledge, but as part of a larger paradigm that centres reciprocity, responsibility to community, and activism.

Research was also guided by the principle of *Etuaptmumk*, a Mi'kmaq methodology and framework known as Two-Eyed Seeing, which involves employing Indigenous ways of learning and knowing and combining it with the Western scientific approach and using both together for the benefit of all. Engaging in Two-Eyed Seeing is a hybrid approach that allows researchers to combine the values of both Indigenous worldviews and Western academic principles.

The production of the focus groups was grounded in a "kitchen table talk" style meeting. This style encourages participants to join in a relaxed environment where they are welcome to engage in their art practices or enjoy a meal while also in discussion. Since this research was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, all interactions with participants had to be undertaken virtually. An approach to engagement was taken to facilitate, as best as virtually possible, a knowledge and energy exchange in a manner that we would have if we were able to engage in person.

Furthermore, demographic information was collected from participants. This information included gender identity, Indigenous community, 2SLGBTQIA+ community membership, primary language, age, place of residence, as well as identifying as a Deaf person or a person with a disability. This report is based on one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and a survey completed between August 2020 and September 2021.

An important methodological consideration through this project was Indigenous self-identification. At several points during the interview process, concerns were raised about some artists who had contentious claims to Indigenous identity or a community. In some cases, these individuals: (a) had no connection to an Indigenous community, (b) had fabricated or illegitimate claims to Indigeneity, (c) claimed membership to groups who themselves have questionable links to Indigeneity, or (d) claimed Indigenous identity based on a single Indigenous ancestor. This issue presented an immediate concern of how to manage our recruitment and participation process. This concern was addressed throughout the research process by undertaking more research on participants prior to inviting them to participate. There was also a broader concern, felt by both participants and researchers, that an enhanced process should be explored to confirm Indigeneity and ensure accountability for funding access more broadly. Concerns about self-identification are further discussed in the thematic results.

Recruitment and Participation

This study aimed to reach three main recruitment groups: (a) Indigenous applicants and recipients of Canada Council's programming, (b) Indigenous artists and cultural carriers with publicly accessible information, and (c) other Indigenous artists and cultural carriers identified through personal networks. The participation process focused on building a shared vision of a respectful intercultural relationship to make space for self-determination and cultural sovereignty. This methodological approach aligns with Indigenous principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP).[1]

Participation in all aspects of the project was completely voluntary and further reporting on the interviews is anonymous. Participants could end their participation at any time and were advised that there were no requirements to directly answer questions – any or all questions could remain unanswered, and participants were encouraged to share any information they felt was relevant to the study. Once the interview or focus groups were completed, participants were provided with a copy of the interview notes for their verification and approval, and generally made only minor corrections. Participants had the flexibility to withdraw their information from this study for up to fourteen days following their participation.

Analysis Protocol

The analysis and preparation of this report are based on Indigenous-specific research methodologies rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing (epistemologies) and ways of being (ontologies). The analysis methodology we used to identify the themes included a combination of inductive and deductive coding strategies to best describe and organize the responses of Indigenous artists in the regions. The themes are based on conceptual codes that emerged from the artists' explicit statements and responses to the interview questions, as well as other codes rooted in Indigenous ways of being, and existing research on Indigenous arts and cultural practices. Throughout this coding process, both explicit and implicit dimensions of the participants' personal narratives and experiences were captured. The themes were explored in each of the artist interviews across all twelve regions. The themes were first compiled and analyzed for each of the twelve research regions, then synthesized into this report.

1 More information on the principles of OCAP can be found here: https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training.

Participation in Interviews by Region

We have included a **"Regional Map"** of the research regions as an appendix to this report. In total, there were 124 interview participants. We achieved adequate representation of interviewees across the 12 research regions. We had the highest representations from regions 6 (Tkaronto), 7 (Great Lakes), and 8 (Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9). We had the least representation from Region 12 (Yukon).

Region Name	Languages of Interviews	Colonial Entities	Number of Interviews
1. Inuit Nunangat	Inuktitut and English	Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut.	8
2. Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey Territory	English	Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Gaspé Peninsula	11
3. Nitassinan, Nitaskinan, Eeyou Istchee, Wendake, Abenaki Communities	English	Much of Quebec, Quebec City, Southern Labrador	10
4. Tiohtià:ke (Urban Indigenous) and Kanienkeha'ka Communities (Akwesasne, Kanesetake, Tyendinaga, Kahnawake, Wahta)	English and French	Montreal Area and St. Lawrence Region, including Kingston and Bay of Quinte	7

Region Name	Languages of Interviews	Colonial Entities	Number of Interviews
5. Kichi Sibi	English and French	Ottawa-Gatineau and Algonquin Territory (Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, including Val D'Or)	8
6. Tkaronto (Urban Indigenous)	English	Toronto	15
7. Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaty areas)	English	All of Ontario south of the Numbered Treaty areas, not including Toronto, Algonquin, or Mohawk communities	13
8. Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9	English	Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, part of Saskatchewan	15
9. Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11	English	Most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories	12
10. Pacific Coast Unceded Territories	English	All of British Columbia other than Vancouver	10
11. Vancouver (Urban Indigenous)	English	Vancouver	11
12. Council of Yukon First Nations	English	Territories of all members of the Yukon council	4

Participation in Focus Groups by Region

In total, there were 112 focus group participants. We had the highest representation in the focus groups from Indigenous arts organizations and in the Kichi Sibi (Ottawa) region. We had the lowest representation in the Nitassinan, Nitaskinan, Eeyou Istchee, Wendake, and Abenaki (Quebec) region. In addition to artists, cultural carriers, and Elders, focus groups were conducted for Indigenous arts/culture organizations and staff members of the Council's *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program and other arts funders that have Indigenous-specific support programs.

Region Name	Language of Focus Group	Colonial Entities	Number of Participants
1. Inuit Nunangat	Inuktitut and English	Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut.	5
2. Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey Territory	English	Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Gaspé Peninsula	8
3. Nitassinan, Nitaskinan, Eeyou Istchee, Wendake, and Abenaki Communities	French	Much of Quebec, Quebec City, Southern Labrador	3
4. Tiohtià:ke (Urban Indigenous) and Kanienkeha'ka Communities (Akwesasne, Kanesetake, Tyendinaga, Kahnawake, Wahta)	English	Montreal Area and St. Lawrence Region, including Kingston and Bay of Quinte	7

Region Name	Language of Focus Group	Colonial Entities	Number of Participants
5. Kichi Sibi	English	Ottawa-Gatineau and Algonquin Territory (Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, including Val D'Or)	11
6. Tkaronto (Urban Indigenous)	English	Toronto	7
7. Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaty areas)	English	All of Ontario south of the Numbered Treaty areas, not including Toronto, Algonquin, or Mohawk communities	5
8. Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9	English	Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, part of Saskatchewan	8
9. Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11	English	Most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories	10
10. Pacific Coast Unceded Territories	English	All of British Columbia other than Vancouver	5
11. Vancouver (Urban Indigenous)	English	Vancouver	5

Region Name	Language of Focus Group	Colonial Entities	Number of Participants
12. Council of Yukon First Nations	English	Territories of all members of the Yukon council	8
13. *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program	English	National	7
14. Arts Organizations	English	National	16
15. Arts Funders	English	National	7

Participation in Survey by Region

The survey received 413 responses from Indigenous artists across Canada apart from Region 12, Council of Yukon First Nations, where the survey did not receive any responses. The greatest representation of responses came from Region 9 consisting of Treaty areas 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11. When asked about their place of residence, the largest portion of respondents indicated Ontario (30%), British Columbia (20%), or Alberta (10%). Nine percent resided in Nova Scotia, 7% in Manitoba, 6% in Quebec, 4% in Newfoundland and Labrador, 3% in Saskatchewan, 2% in New Brunswick, and 2% claimed residency in two provinces.

Region Name	Colonial Entities	Percentage of Survey Respondents
1. Inuit Nunangat	Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.	1%
2. Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey Territory	Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Gaspé Peninsula	15%
3. Nitassinan, Nitaskinan, Eeyou Istchee, Wendake, and Abenaki Communities	Much of Quebec, Quebec City, Southern Labrador	5%
4. Tiohtià:ke (Urban Indigenous) and Kanienkeha'ka Communities (Akwesasne, Kanesetake, Tyendinaga, Kahnawake, Wahta)	Montreal Area and St. Lawrence Region, including Kingston and Bay of Quinte	3%
5. Kichi Sibi	Ottawa-Gatineau and Algonquin Territory (Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, including Val D'Or)	6%

Region Name	Colonial Entities	Percentage of Survey Respondents
6. Tkaronto (Urban Indigenous)	Toronto	10%
7. Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaty areas)	All of Ontario south of the Numbered Treaty areas, not including Toronto, Algonquin, or Mohawk communities	12%
8. Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9	Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, part of Saskatchewan	11%
9. Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11	Most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories	16%
10. Pacific Coast Unceded Territories	All of British Columbia other than Vancouver	13%
11. Vancouver (Urban Indigenous)	Vancouver	7%
12. Council of Yukon First Nations	Territories of all members of the Yukon council	0%

Demographics

Interview Demographics

Across the 12 research regions, we achieved good representation across diverse identities and demographics of the interviewees. The majority of the interviewees had received funding from the Council in the past (69%) and a minority had not previously received funding from the Council (29%). Participants represented a wide range of artistic mediums, including visual artists, authors, dancers and choreographers, filmmakers, fashion designers, poets, beadworkers, and Knowledge Keepers amongst many others.

There was a broad age range included in these interviews. The interviewees ranged from 21 to 91 years of age and the average age was about 41 years. In terms of language, the majority identified English as their primary language (75%), some identified French as their primary language (14%), and several interviewees identified an Indigenous language (10%). Most of the interviewees were women (67%), some were men (32%), and 6% Two-Spirit or non-binary. Additionally, 23% identified as 2SLGBTQIA+. Finally, 6% identified as being Deaf, partially deaf, or hard-of-hearing, and 19% identified as individuals with a disability. Most of the interviewees identified as being First Nations (74%) and others as Métis (18%) and Inuk (8%). There was a reasonable representation of both urban (50%) and rural (44%) residents and some who identified as living in both urban and rural settings (6%).

Focus Group Demographics

The demographics for the focus group portion of the project were very similar to those of the interview portion. Among the 112 participants, a wide range of different artistic practices and backgrounds were represented. This included visual artists, writers, theatre artists, dancers, traditional tattoo artists, filmmakers, canoe makers, Knowledge Keepers, and arts administrators amongst many others.

Approximately 73% identified as First Nations, 20% identified as Métis, and 7% as Inuk. Forty percent of participants identified as urban and 48% were rural. The remaining 12% identified as living in both urban and rural settings. There were several comments made that the impact of the pandemic led many participants to either relocate to rural areas or to return to in community.

The ages of participants ranged from 23 to 90, with an average age of 40 years old. A majority (51%) of participants were women, while 42.9% were men, and 5.1% were Two-Spirit or non-binary. Approximately one quarter (27.5%) identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Finally, 8.7% of participants identified as being Deaf, partially deaf, or hard-of-hearing, and 25.5% of participants identified as having a disability.

Survey Demographics

The 413 online survey responses represented a diverse group of Indigenous artists (including filmmakers, writers, carvers, beadworkers, photographers, and musicians), Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and cultural carriers from across the country. Approximately one quarter (26%) of survey respondents completed an interview during the earlier stages of this project. The majority (72%) of respondents identified as being First Nations, 24% identified as Métis, and 8% identified as Inuk. Most respondents (60%) were between the ages of 45 and 64.

Fifty-six percent of respondents were women, 30% men, and 18% Two-Spirit or non-binary. Additionally, 30% of respondents identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Finally, 8% identified as being Deaf, partially deaf, or hard-of-hearing, and 30% of participants identified as having a disability. Of the total respondents, when asked the type of region they work and live in, 56% responded urban (in a city), 36% rural (in a small community), 13% suburban (in a community within commuting distant to a city) and 8% responded remote (in a community with limited or no road access).

Setting the Stage

The findings of this report cannot be understood in a vacuum. Foundational work has already been undertaken nationally and globally concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples. This section provides an overview of that context, helping to illustrate the significance of our report, and grounding our findings within the context of a larger movement of truth, acknowledgement, and a shared responsibility to address historic and ongoing inequities. We cannot move forward into an era of reconciliation without an awareness of the realities of Indigenous peoples in Canada and globally.

It is integral to read and reflect on this section before reading the following sections of this report. This section is intended to situate and engage the reader in a lens of reflection, reconciliation, and action. We would like readers to accept the truth of the findings of these reports, accept the responsibilities that institutions have to address them, and consider how they are interwoven with the truths and experiences brought forth by the hundreds of Indigenous artists who graciously contributed to this project.

Overview

The relationship between Indigenous people and Canada has a long history that is fraught with struggles, including the historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous people through forced cultural dislocation, forced relocation, assimilation, oppression, violence, and attempted genocide. These are important considerations for institutions, as Indigenous-specific issues are often not Indigenous-created issues; rather, the outcome of colonial policies and practices of Canada. These issues are a shared responsibility of settler society and colonial administrations in what we now know as Canada. However, Indigenous peoples need to be seen as leaders in decolonization.

As this report has been written, Indigenous-Canadian relations have been slowly mounting to a precipice. Recent events that have raised national and international attention to Indigenous-Canadian relations include the uncovering of unmarked graves of Indigenous children that died in residential schools; violation of Indigenous rights to traditional livelihoods; lack of access to clean drinking water in Indigenous communities; increasing suicide rates of Indigenous people, particularly youth; and the disproportionate rate at which Indigenous women and girls are murdered or go missing in Canada. The inequity and injustice for Indigenous peoples in Canada has been long identified, and there are many reports that address the need for reform of Indigenous-Canadian relations.
It has been:

- 56 years since the publication of the *Hawthorn Report*[2];
- 26 years since the release of the report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*;
- 15 years since the United Nations adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;

2 "A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies" by H.B. Hawthorn (1966).

- 7 years since the release of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report*;
- 3 years since the publication of the *Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*;
- And 1 year since the Bill C-15 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* passed the Senate and received Royal Assent in Canada.

There is a current of change flowing through the relationship between Indigenous peoples in Canada and the historical colonial structures that have segregated Indigenous peoples from mainstream Canadian society, economy, and citizenship. Many individuals and organizations have taken up the torch of responsibility to act within their own realms to address the disparity between Indigenous peoples in Canada and their settler counterparts. Prepared on behalf of the Canada Council for the Arts, this report is a contribution to that effort.

This is an exciting time for Indigenous arts and cultures. We have come a long way since the cultural bans enforced through the Indian Act (1880-1951), including the 1884 potlach ban and the 1895 ban on all Indigenous festivals and ceremonies. We are at a time where Indigenous artists are more visible, and Indigenous art is no longer relegated to the history books or museums. To date, many significant changes in this regard have already taken place, such as the rise in Indigenous curatorial practices, the rise in Indigenous dance and theatre companies, the growth in Indigenous arts sectors such as film and literature, as well as the growing recognition of the excellence of Indigenous artists by award granting organizations.

Within the Council, funding programs and initiatives to address historical injustices have been created. For example, the {Re}conciliation initiative was launched in 2015 by the Council to respond to Call to Action #83 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which calls for the establishment, as a funding priority, to develop a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process. The *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program followed in 2017, which serves as a response to calls from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The launch of the program aligned with a commitment made by the Council to triple funding for Indigenous artists, arts organizations, and cultural carriers.

As these changes have taken place, it is pertinent to remember and situate this work and future work within the developing context and narrative around Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and self-determination. Therefore, we outline key points from the lineage of documents on the status and rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

In 2007, The United Nations General Assembly adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). UNDRIP recognizes the equal human rights of Indigenous peoples to all other peoples against any form of discrimination and seeks to promote mutual respect and harmonious relations between Indigenous peoples, States, and non-Indigenous peoples. On June 21, 2021, Bill c-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* Act received Royal Assent, meaning the Government of Canada must align Canadian law with the articles in UNDRIP. Regarding arts and culture, UNDRIP says:

Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs. (UNDRIP pg. 6)

Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral

traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measure to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights. (UNDRIP pg. 11)

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The 1996 report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) investigated and proposed solutions to the challenges affecting the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Regarding Indigenous arts and cultures, the Commission concludes the following:

> Because the fostering of Aboriginal artistic talent has been woefully neglected in Canadian institutions, and because the distinctive expression of Aboriginal voice, rooted in a spiritual world view and ceremonial performance, has been actively suppressed, we see the need for active support of Aboriginal arts for at least a generation while Aboriginal arts, literature and performance are being revitalized. Such support should be over and above the recognition of Aboriginal arts by mainstream cultural granting agencies.

The Commission recommends that:

> 3.6.19
> Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments co-operate to establish and fund an Aboriginal Arts Council, with a minimum 20-year life span and an annual budget equivalent to five per cent of the Canada Council budget, to foster the revitalization and development of Aboriginal arts and literature.
>
> 3.6.20
> Governments, public agencies and private organizations that provide support for the visual and performing arts, in co-operation with Aboriginal artists and performers, review all aspects of their programs to ensure that
>
> a. Criteria for grants and awards are relevant to Aboriginal arts and artists;

and

b. Aboriginal people and perspectives are adequately represented on decision-making bodies, juries, advisory committees and staff.

3.6.21
Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments, in co-operation with Aboriginal artists, writers and performers, support and promote the revitalization and development of Aboriginal literary, visual and performing arts through

a. Support of training programs in schools, cultural institutions and professional associations, and participation of Aboriginal students in professional studies in the arts; and
b. Accommodating requirements for the appropriate display and performance of Aboriginal arts in the design of public facilities in Aboriginal communities and the communities at large. (RCAP V.3, p. 601)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its six-volume report on the findings of its investigation into the impacts of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples in Canada. Calls to action for the arts community and Canada Council for the Arts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are:

COMMEMORATION

79. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration.

83. We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

The recommendations, calls to action, and articles listed in this section are only a fraction of the steps to be taken to follow the path of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples in Canada and settler communities. All the documents discussed in this section are freely available for anyone interested in further understanding the path of reconciliation.

Part 1. The Indigenous Community and Arts and Culture

During the research process, participants unanimously expressed that arts and cultural practices are deeply interwoven with Indigenous ways of being. Participants explained that the benefits of Indigenous arts and cultures include language revitalization, community-building, storytelling, and cultural continuity, among many others. The findings from these discussions are divided into four overarching sections: the role of Indigenous arts and cultural practices, community support and relationships, controlling our stories, and artistic rights and ownership.

The Role of Indigenous Arts and Cultural Practices

Throughout the interviews, focus groups and survey, it became evident that art plays a variety of roles in the lives of Indigenous artists, including, but not limited to, spirituality, language revitalization, community-building, storytelling, honouring relationships, and cultural continuity. From the online survey, when respondents were asked to describe their role in arts and culture 72% of participants identified as artists; 8% as Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or cultural carriers; 18% as arts professionals; 6% as educators, instructors, or researchers; an additional 6% chose "other"; and 2% identified as arts and culture organization staff members. Many of these individuals described that art was not a simple practice, but a way of life. One participant shared that:

> **"[A]n Indigenous life is filled with art. Beading, dancing, singing, cultural activities, sweat lodge, preparation of medicine…art is life. I would suggest that I was raised by artists in my community. It all starts with the heart, not a lot starts with the head."**
> **- Region 8 Participant[3]**

The vast majority of participants expressed the role spirituality plays in their artwork. They shared that their art was a way for them to connect to land, ancestors, community, ceremony, the dreamworld, healing, and honouring of the self. Ultimately, participants

3 Region 8 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9 (Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, and some of Saskatchewan).

found that learning these skills and traditions becomes a way of life. One participant shared:

> **"My work is guided by my ancestors. I am guided or told what to do. I don't create work to please people. I create work because it is a reflection of my experience and how I need to do work to uplift and move and heal what I'm connected to."**
> **- Region 7 Participant**[4]

Language revitalization efforts were a particular focus for musicians who noted the unique role art can play in re-learning and sharing Indigenous languages. Artists emphasized that part of their role in communities is to pass forward tradition and knowledge, and many felt it was their responsibility to prioritize language transmission. Language and art also coalesce at a more community-based level, with some artists participating in beadwork groups that simultaneously practice language.

Furthermore, Indigenous art was described as participatory, meaning that it involves opportunities for all community members to participate. It is family-oriented and multi-generational, and often female-oriented. There is a significant emphasis on connecting to ancestral knowledge, be it through Elders, the dreamworld, ceremony, or blood memory (Notes from Region 8).[5] Artists from Region 1 expressed that art is a way of life that connected them to their greater community, the land, language, culture, identity, and healing. Artists also expressed a sense of responsibility to their communities, as many acted as volunteers, advocates, and community workers.

Perhaps the most important role of the arts is the ability to tell stories through various art forms and mediums, as it is a valuable and accessible way to record history outside of a "textbook" written form. For some, storytelling was their first introduction to arts and culture – they grew up hearing their grandparents, aunties, and other family members sharing knowledge through stories passed on from generation to generation. Participants shared that storytelling helps to ground themselves in their culture.

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4 Region 7 is comprised of the Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaties areas).

5 Region 8 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9 (Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, and part of Saskatchewan).

One participant noted:

> **"My grandfather was a great storyteller, and [...] a lot of people would love to hear him talk [...]. People really, really respected him and he had a lot of knowledge, and he shared that knowledge [which] became my first grounding."**
> **- Region 9 Participant**[6]

Stories are at the heart of culture and community. Survey respondents said that the most relevant field of artistic and cultural practice to respondents were storytelling (44%), contemporary visual arts (41%), cultural knowledge transfer (36%), customary/traditional visual arts (28%), land-based practices (26%), and multidisciplinary activities (26%). One artist expressed that art was not an initial focus or interest for them, but because they were raised on the land by grandparents on the trapline, art became "inherited subconsciously."

The arts are intrinsic to an Indigenous way of life. Art is a form of self-expression for the artist, but given the relational nature of Indigenous cultures, it is also a form of community and nation expression. Some participants noted that they may have never become artists if it were not for these relationships to community and nation, and therefore felt a deep sense of responsibility to their communities and kin to share their stories. One participant noted, "I think that my responsibilities to my Elders are to carry their messages when they ask me to, and how they ask me to, and to make sure that I always do that in a good way" (Quote from Region 9 Participant).[6] Some felt that because these "cultural teachings are woven into the art form, they carry a sense of responsibility to the community to convey these messages in a way that others connect with and [can] safely carry" (Quote from Region 9 Participant).[6]

Art allows for the artist to use their voices and tell their stories in their own way. It is an outlet for expression: to express trauma, for humour and laughter, and to share messages of hope, decolonization, sovereignty, and resistance. Many artists felt that participating in an artistic practice was an important aspect of reclamation and reasserting Indigenous presence across Canada:

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6 Region 9 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories).

> **"We're in a time of reclamation now, and I think a lot of Indigenous people… are hungry to know themselves. Access to our ways is extremely important. Access to our ways through art and culture is extremely important because it means that we have access to our history, language, ways of knowing and the deeper messages that lie within our stories. Everyone can learn from these ways. Spirituality is storytelling and self-expression. These messages aren't just for us, they're there for everyone. It's the transfer of culture to those who didn't have access and connection to the land."**
> **- Region 3 Participant**[7]

Being surrounded by other creative and talented artists influenced many of the participants: "I grew up surrounded by Kookum's art"; "I come from a family of carvers"; "I was inspired by aunties, uncles, mom and grandparents"; "my grandmother was a beader." As a result, Indigenous communities are brimming with artists, and communities take great pride in art. Learning and collaborating with family and community members is common (Notes from Region 11).[8] When survey respondents were asked how they learned their current artistic or cultural practice most respondents indicated they were self-taught (76%) and taught by Elders or cultural carriers (64%). About half of the participants indicated parents, family, or other relations had taught them (51%). Forty-three percent had learnt through a post-secondary institution, 41% in lessons or classes, 29% through arts or cultural apprenticeship or mentorship, 24% in an academy or other disciplinary program, and 11% selected "other." From all forms of data collected, the primary modes of arts skills development come outside official arts academies and educational institutions.

It is clear that art plays an incredibly important role in the lives of artists as well as their communities and families. The survey asked respondents to describe their artistic and cultural practices; these responses were then coded to relate to themes addressed in the survey. Most respondents had answers that reflected that their artistic and cultural practices were informed by a desire for cultural continuity (51%); to honour community, cultural, and ancestorial relationships (49%); and storytelling traditions (48%).

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7 Region 3 is comprised of Nitassinan, Nitaskinan, Eeyou Istchee, Wendake, and Abenaki Communities (much of Quebec, Quebec City, Southern Labrador).

8 Region 11 is comprised of the Vancouver area.

Art allows Indigenous people to connect to their spirituality, language, community, stories, relations, and culture.

Controlling Our Stories

Artists almost universally expressed a desire for an arts world that worked for community while also striving to push artistic boundaries, gain recognition, and aim for excellence. They felt that there needed to be more control of who was telling Indigenous stories and how Indigenous stories were being told. Many saw their own presence in the art world as an important step towards reclamation:

> **"In every [medium], we are underrepresented. There aren't any parts that are made for Native people, so I thought if I started making them, they would be more visible... It puts a face onto something that is faceless, it's about representation and creating human beings out of things that are caricatures in Canada right now. It needs to keep moving forward."**
> **- Region 6 Participant**[9]

The goal for these artists is to eventually see Indigenous arts everywhere, not just in Indigenous-specific places. As one artist succinctly shared: "the ultimate goal is that such organizations become, one day, no longer needed" (Quote from Region 8 Participant).[10] Simply put, this participant wanted to see Indigenous art be so prevalent that it would not only be relegated to Indigenous-specific spaces.

Given the major contributions of Indigenous artists to the arts sector, Indigenous peoples must be active participants in all aspects of the arts funding realm, including decision-making positions. Representation matters, and such changes create genuine opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation, and breaking barriers. It should be noted that the Council's *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program is by, for, and led by Indigenous people. There are also other notable examples of Indigenous-led arts organizations

9 Region 6 is comprised of Tkaronto (Toronto).

10 Region 8 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9 (Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, and part of Saskatchewan).

and funding agencies, like the Indigenous Screen Office and the First Peoples' Cultural Council that provide invaluable support for Indigenous artists across the country. Furthermore, opportunities for capacity building such as jurying opportunities and workshops should be facilitated. Participants shared their desires to see more of these programs and organizations and more support for them. Participants envisioned greater support for Indigenous understandings of art, such as land-based activities, language exploration, and community building, alongside promoting financial stability and equitable funding. Ultimately, these efforts should sustain and encourage excellence in Indigenous arts.

Finally, and most importantly, participants shared that art allows for Indigenous resurgence, community building, and decolonization. Indigenous governance and sovereignty are fundamental parts of Indigenous artistry, creative production, and culture. Therefore, it is vital for mainstream arts organizations to be allies and support this fundamental work. Art is an intrinsic part of Indigeneity, and therefore art organizations must fully support Indigenous resurgence, decolonization, and self-determination. Ultimately, Indigenous artists represent diverse experiences of Indigenous peoples from across Canada. In prioritizing the needs of Indigenous artists, funding and capacity-building initiatives also support entire Indigenous communities.

Artistic Rights and Ownership

A particular challenge within Indigenous artistic and cultural communities is the incongruent understanding of ownership and rights between Indigenous and settler worldviews. Many participants shared that they do not own their art or knowledge, as these things are linked to community. Some styles or songs, for example, are collectively owned by nations, clans, or families, and different communities have varied understandings of ownership. One participant succinctly shared that even though ownership is colonial, and Indigenous people understand themselves as caretakers instead, there is still the issue that if Indigenous people do not claim ownership, they will not be able to maintain those relationships as caretakers. One participant shared how this non-ownership is embedded in their language, especially in regard to storytelling:

> **"In the Anishinaabe worldview, once a story is out there, you put it out there. People can become attached to it and share it too. It's part of the community now. I don't feel like it's mine... It belongs to the community. Some of the things I use in my work, I got them from various places as well. It came through me, it lived in me, and it came out through me in a cycle. Aadzokan(ag/ak) is the "spirit of the story" and it's living and breathing, and that's the Anishinaabe worldview of it, and mine as well. And no one can say they own aadzokan."**
> **- Region 8 Participant**[11]

Therefore, it is evident that Indigenous notions of ownership are incompatible with Western understandings. Participants understood Western notions of ownership and copyright as individualistic and based on protecting profit, whereas Indigenous notions of ownership are more collective.

Nonetheless, many Indigenous artists are part of the cultural economy and rely on being paid for their art. Being able to sell their artwork provides necessary income for them and helps to support their families and communities. However, some participants shared concerns about a lack of fair compensation when they do participate in the cultural economy. While this was a concern for artists across the country, it was a particular concern for Inuit artists, who shared that many non-Indigenous people and non-Inuit come to the North, buy Inuit art, and resell the artwork at an inflated price. One participant focuses their advocacy on this particular issue:

> **"I mentioned the artist resale rights, if we were able to get that, then a lot of Inuit artists would benefit. The vast majority of Inuit art created is for commercial consumption, and there has been a lot of efforts made by commercial galleries and the people involved with that to really discourage the discussion of artist resell rights."**
> **- Region 1 Participant**[12]

11 Region 8 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9 (Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, and some of Saskatchewan).

12 Region 1 is comprised of Inuit Nunangat (Inuvialuit Settlement Region [northern Northwest Territories], Nunavut, Nunavik [northern Quebec] and Nunatsiavut [northern Labrador]).

Simply put, it is necessary for many Indigenous artists to participate in the cultural economy so that they can financially support their families and communities. However, the main issue at hand is how to ensure that they are fairly compensated and not exploited for their work, in a way that respects Indigenous concepts of ownership. In that same regard, participants also shared concerns about the cultural appropriation of Indigenous art, especially when it led to profit for non-Indigenous people. Cultural appropriation has been and continues to be prominent in the arts and it is not uncommon for Indigenous artists' work to be exploited in this way. While many artists draw information and inspiration from other artists, the participants highlighted the common practice of non-Indigenous artists stealing Indigenous artwork. One artist had their art stolen from their sketchbook, and later found it online. Another artist spoke about a company owned by a non-Indigenous person that offers good royalties to draw artists in and then profits greatly off of the artwork. It took the artist to experience this appropriation, both at the hands of non-Indigenous artists as well as other Indigenous artists, to realize the lack of consequences for doing so, and the need for laws and regulations to protect artists.

To further complicate the issue of rights, it has been shared that the pow wow community, artistic community, and the wider Indigenous community, often lack the knowledge of how to protect Indigenous content. There is little understanding of copyright, community rights, or how to navigate the cultural industries, and as a result, Indigenous art is being stolen, including archival work. Indigenous responses to these complications, however, focus on responsibility, permission, and consent. Artists suggested that sharing or borrowing content is about consent. However, it is the responsibility of the artist to know the work and how to properly ask for permission.

Participants expressed that although one can sell their work, ultimately, Indigenous knowledge, symbols, and artwork should belong to a family, clan, community, or nation. It is understood that some cultures have protocol around symbols, songs, and other artistic expressions, often with families being caretakers of particular works. As such, it is crucial to begin establishing relationships with the community while embarking on artistic endeavours – this allows artists to learn their own traditions and avoid appropriating from others.

Furthermore, participants shared that it is important to always acknowledge and give credit to teachers and people from whom you draw inspiration; however, directly copying is not acceptable. Ultimately, artists stated that notions of ownership are incompatible with Indigenous worldviews. Instead, artists understand themselves as caretakers of knowledge with responsibilities to their communities. One participant eloquently shared her experience:

> **"When I do my own work, working with young people, I don't think of it as my ownership, but something we all own. If we're going out to explore, we all do the exploration. It's not about owning an idea. I try to get the youth not to think that way. Thinking you own something is a lesson I try to avoid teaching because I don't want them to think they own something. We're all here on borrowed time, it's a short time. They're going to take that knowledge with them to their families. My house looks like an art gallery. If I were to die tomorrow, where is that going to go? I'm going to give a name and let someone look after that art, so the art can keep working with the young people. To help young people have dreams. Not to own but have dreams."**
> **- Region 7 Participant**[13]

It is clear, according to this artist and others interviewed, that Indigenous peoples do not relate to art ownership in accordance with Western beliefs and institutional practices.

13 Region 7 is comprised of the Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaties areas.)

Part 2. Value of Public Funding

In all aspects of the research process, artists expressed how public funding is integral to the success of Indigenous artists. Many artists spoke of how public funding allowed them to undertake meaningful artistic or cultural work that they otherwise would not have been able to do. From the survey, 42.4% of respondents said they strongly agreed that support from the Council has had a positive impact on their artistic or cultural practice, 16.1% agreed, 27.3% felt neutral/undecided, 7.5% disagreed, and 6.7% strongly disagreed. Most respondents (58.5%) felt that the Council has had a positive impact on their practice.

When it comes to the role of the Council in Indigenous communities, a substantial number of respondents (45.3%) felt that the Council had made a positive impact in their community; 24.4% strongly agreed, 20.9% agreed, 43.2% felt neutral or undecided, 7.7% disagreed, and 4.7% strongly disagreed. The participants that disagreed that the Council made a positive impact in their community predominantly came from the Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey territory (Region 2) (19.6%), and Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (Region 9) (19.6%).

This section explores the integral role of public funding for Indigenous artists and looks specifically at successes and strengths, relationship building, and several guiding examples.

Success and Strengths

Across all interviews, focus groups, and survey participation, participants were unanimous that public funding is vital for the reclamation, inclusion, and accessibility of Indigenous arts and cultures. While responses varied greatly throughout the regions concerning the successes and strengths of arts funding organizations like the Council, most participants agreed that institutions like the Council offer crucial support for countless Indigenous artists across the country. In more rural areas, participants were generally more positive about the experiences that they had with the Council, perhaps because they had access to fewer Indigenous-led arts organizations than those in urban areas. Despite the concerns outlined by participants including issues like allocation and amount of funding, many artists felt that their experiences with the Council had been generally positive and straightforward.

Many artists spoke of how their experiences with the Council had improved over the years. Among more established artists and those who had been working in their field for several decades, participants were pleased to see an overall shift in the makeup of juries and leadership positions at the Council. One participant reflected:

> **"If I were to start to reflect upon the last 10 years, I think [the Council] are doing a much better job of inclusion through a number of their grants, including the 'caring, knowing, sharing grant' [*Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program]."**[14]
> **- Region 9 Participant**[15]

Over the years, they have seen more Indigenous representation on the Council's juries and in leadership positions, which they felt was a positive step for several reasons. For instance, they felt that it was symptomatic of more Indigenous artists being successful, and that it would also mean that more authentic and quality Indigenous art would be funded if it were being judged by Indigenous peoples themselves, as Indigenous artists could determine for themselves what is authentic and quality Indigenous art.

Overall, despite the concerns that artists shared about accessibility and funding, which will be discussed later in the report, participants felt that if the Council was willing to fund an initiative like this research project, then that was a positive sign. This is further evidenced by the fact that the Council nearly quadrupled funding for Indigenous creation between 2016 and 2021. Similar commitments to increase funding for Indigenous arts have been made by numerous other funding agencies, including the British Columbia Arts Council,[16] the Ontario Arts Council,[17] and the government of Prince Edward Island.[18] There was, amongst participants, a strong sense of optimism for the for future support for Indigenous art.

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14 This participant in referring to the Creating, Knowing and Sharing program, which funds Indigenous artists, organizations, and cultural carriers through a variety of components.

15 Region 9 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories).

16 https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/indigenous-arts-program-now-accepting-applications/#:~:text=The%20BC%20Arts%20Council%20provides,by%20the%20BC%20Arts%20Council

17 https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001099/ontario-supporting-indigenous-and-emerging-artists

18 https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/indigenous-arts-grant-program

Some other areas where artists felt as though they had received adequate support from the Council included their interactions with program officers and staff, especially those who are themselves Indigenous, who they felt made the application process much more straightforward. Furthermore, several artists expressed satisfaction with the emergency funding allocated to Indigenous applicants due to the COVID-19 pandemic (the Community Cares initiative as well as general government funding dispersed by the Council), which they felt had provided them with support at a very vulnerable time. It is also important to note that not all artists received funding during COVID-19; one participant noted that they were facing homelessness and struggled significantly during the pandemic.

Relationship Building

The importance of relationship building between arts funders and institutions and Indigenous communities was acknowledged and highlighted by all participants. Several themes emerged throughout interviews. Artists identified the importance of safe spaces and Indigenous-specific spaces, including spaces for members of the Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ community; the need for networking opportunities amongst Indigenous artists; the success of collaboration with other marginalized people such as other racialized communities; and the hopes of building bridges with non-Indigenous and mainstream organizations.

Most participants expressed the need for safe spaces wherein they were not tokenized: "I would like to go in the room as an Indigenous performer and not need to teach" (Quote from Region 7 Participant).[19] Indigenous people must be given space to do what they want to do. Participants articulated, for example, that it is important to have a space where funders cede control and funding to Indigenous-run organizations to operate according to their own needs and volition, without pressures, obligations, and expectations from funders (Notes from Region 7).[19] Some participants felt that there were too many strings attached to some funding, and many wanted to see more freedom for them to make decisions about how the funding was allocated.

19 Region 7 is comprised of the Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaties areas).

Art creates various opportunities for relationship building, notably within the arts community itself. Through various networking opportunities, such as events and conferences, Indigenous artists are able to connect, share knowledge and support one another as part of "an amazing art community." Some felt that the opportunity to connect with artists was beneficial and educational as artists can meet with those who bring a different perspective to the work. Indigenous artists have fostered a supportive, inclusive arts community that has created space for specific discussions. They also assist in building capacity to help each other navigate art galleries, consignment fees, application processes, and other such challenges. One interviewee stated that: "the current competitive nature of the arts system is not sustainable for many artists because it leads to burnout, meaning that artists feel exhausted, stressed, and overworked" (Quote from Region 9 Participant).[20] Positive relationships between Indigenous artists contribute to the dismantling of "colonial competitiveness" amongst artists.

Lastly, public funding for art provides an opportunity to bridge relations between mainstream organizations, settler communities, and Indigenous peoples. Art is a means to connect to other cultures and peoples, and it provides space for important and sometimes difficult conversations. This can also be healing, given the history of this country. As one respondent said, art is "able to bridge differences to connect through different ways and find common ground" (Quote from Region 9 Participant).[20] Building and nurturing such relationships, particularly with mainstream organizations, can lead to an increase in support to Indigenous artists and capacity building opportunities. Evidently, art opens doors for Indigenous artists to reach not only other Indigenous artists and communities, but also artists and art enthusiasts from other marginalized communities as well as mainstream communities. It is this relationship building that facilitates a healthy and interconnected art world for Indigenous artists.

20 Region 9 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories).

Guiding Examples

There were many examples of successes that were brought up in interviews and focus groups. They are explored in this section of the report to offer concrete examples of the ways in which public funding for Indigenous art can have widespread positive effects for artists and for whole communities. Moreover, these examples illustrate the potentially transformative power of properly and adequately funded Indigenous art projects that are led by Indigenous peoples.

For instance, art in the North has been an incredible tool to foster a sense of pride among Inuit. Inuit art and performance organizations have been leaders in this work. Isuma TV, which is Inuk-led, provides a great example of encouraging Inuit-specific content and prioritizing Inuktitut in its programming. Isuma TV also supports community initiatives, smaller organizations, and the youth.

ArtCirq, an Inuit circus performance collective, uses art to foster collaboration and relationship-building with artists across the North and beyond. These relationships are not only between artists, but also between youth, Elders, and the land. A Region 1 participant describes some of ArtCirq's holistic programming:

> **"Whenever we bring non-Indigenous artists to Igloolik... we make them teach what they know to the young people. Then the other part of the trip, we go out on the land, where the white circus teacher becomes the student, and the student becomes the teacher. They share traditional skills. After a trip like that everyone feels equal and shared who they are for real. They don't stay in student/teacher relationships."**
> **- Region 1 Participant**[21]

This programming is unique and demonstrates the importance and inevitability of connecting art to land and culture. Most notable with these two organizations is that content is created by and for the Inuit community.

21 Region 1 is comprised of Inuit Nunangat (Inuvialuit Settlement Region [northern Northwest Territories], Nunavut, Nunavik [northern Quebec] and Nunatsiavut [northern Labrador]).

A unique success story in the Great Lakes region is the Beadwork Revolution. The Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council (MNOYC) developed a campaign on social media using the hashtag, #beadworkrevolution. The Beadwork Revolution began in 2017 with the intention of encouraging Indigenous people, especially Métis youth, to take on the traditions of their ancestors and to begin beading. A participant shared the shift they saw:

> **"The MNOYC and the Beadwork Revolution really made the leap between something we used to do and something we do now. The changes I've noticed are huge. So many people now who are interested in learning. There is a whole group of people who know enough and can teach... We're getting things revitalized. The MNOYC has sold 4,000 bead kits, which means $70,000 for youth cultural initiatives. This means creating revenue to support more learning."**
> **- Region 7 Participant**[22]

This campaign has been particularly successful because beadwork is accessible and there is a vibrant online community encouraging beadworkers and sharing skills and techniques. This has been especially important for urban artists, as it helps connect them to tradition, ancestors, and community. Participants also expressed positive experiences working with Indigenous-owned and Indigenous-run organizations. Native Earth, the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), and the Dreamcatcher Charitable Foundation were identified by artists for best practices. Artists noted other positive collaborations have been through universities and colleges with Indigenous leadership, or other organizations with Indigenous leadership, such as Manitoba Music (Notes from Regions 7, 8,[23] and 12).[24]

Indigenous artists have also had positive experiences with Indigenous service delivery, governance, and advocacy organizations, such as Friendship Centers and the Métis Nation. Though the types of programs and service delivery may vary between organizations, these organizations facilitate arts and culture due to their similar goals of creating a space for community engagement. Furthermore, beyond the artwork itself,

22 Region 7 is comprised of the Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaties areas).

23 Region 8 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 1, 2, 3, 5, and 9 (Northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, and some of Saskatchewan).

24 Region 12 is comprised of the territories of all members of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Indigenous artists are involved in changing systems, institutions, and funding models. One participant explained the roles Indigenous artists are playing in their communities and in the arts community at large:

> **"They're in leadership and influencer roles. They're creating more opportunities for our contemporary artforms to be taken seriously. They're fighting for more representation in those institutions. They're leading these things. [...] Now, we're leading our own things, nationwide. We've elevated our engagement in the national institutions beyond making 'nice looking things.' Art has been a pathway to self- determination and self-representation and used as a tool for social justice and education by raising awareness about social issues and affecting positive change."**
> **- Region 12 Participant.**[25]

Therefore, it is not merely the support of Indigenous organizations and non-Indigenous arts organizations that allow Indigenous arts to grow; it is the dedication, perseverance, and passion of Indigenous artists themselves who are creating positive change for their communities and their forms of expression.

As highlighted by artists in Region 12, a local art organization hired a young Indigenous artistic director who has done substantial work around relationship building with local communities that are often marginalized, in particular those from Indigenous, Black, queer, and trans communities. Through these collaborations, there has been an influx of original programming. As a result, the audience has diversified (Notes from Region 12).[29] This has enhanced the relationships in community and allowed for a safe space to bring artists and audiences together.

These guiding examples serve as reminders of the transformative power of art for Indigenous communities. Each of these examples provides valuable insight about the role that Indigenous arts organizations play in fostering and supporting Indigenous artists. They are fundamental to the greater arts funding ecosystem and, as will be discussed later in this report, provide support that is not provided by non-Indigenous organizations.

25 Region 12 is comprised of the territories of all members of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Part 3. Accessing Funding

Throughout the research process, participants acknowledged numerous barriers that prevent Indigenous artists from accessing necessary funding for their art. While public funding for Indigenous artists is integral to their success, many have struggled to access the funding that they need. The previous section highlighted responses from survey participants as to the positive impact the Council has had on their community and artistic/cultural practice. Although the majority felt that the Council had a positive impact on their practice (58.5%), and a substantial amount (45.3%) felt the Council had a positive impact on their community, there is still room to maximize the value of funding for applicants and Indigenous communities. This section summarizes and explores these barriers, which have been divided into seven categories: access to funding opportunities, gatekeeping, and professionalism, supporting applicants in remote communities, language support, mentorship opportunities, and identity and funding.

Access to Funding Opportunities

Across all regions, the most frequent challenge that was raised by participants was difficulties in accessing funding from arts funding agencies including the Council. It should be noted that the Council nearly quadrupled funding for Indigenous creation from 2016 to 2021. While this increase in support has been noted and appreciated by many participants, there remains a need for more support for Indigenous artists. A total of 373 participants responded to the question that asked whether they have applied for funding from the Council in the last three years; more than half of the participants (69.4%) indicated that they have applied for funding. The remaining approximately 30.5% either have not applied for funding in the last three years (28.4%) or were not sure (2.14%).

Participants repeatedly raised concerns about the high cost of living in many areas of the country, and how they faced challenges earning sufficient income from their artistic practice. Although this concern was primarily expressed by artists living in larger urban centers, like Toronto, it was echoed by those living in more rural areas, who also worried about their cost of living. Participants felt that there could also be more support for artists for income generation, and that a higher proportion of overall arts funding should be allocated to Indigenous artists. Some artists mentioned that the Council could also help to support Indigenous artists by advocating for more affordable housing or studio

space opportunities for them. While funding spaces and buildings is not something that the Council currently undertakes, there could be more collaboration between them and other organizations that do fund and build spaces. Furthermore, the Council could provide Indigenous artists with more information about where they can access this kind of support.

Artists also shared that there is a barrier for smaller organizations who apply for funding. These organizations are applying for funding from the same pot as well-established and urban organizations. It is challenging for these smaller organizations to have the staffing capacity or grant-writing literacy that is comparable to larger organizations with core funding or multi-year funding. This issue was particularly "prominent for northern and rural organizations, who operate under unique and challenging circumstances" (Quote from Region 7 Participant).[26]

One concern that was raised was the ways funding resources are further limited by taxation policies that create added barriers for Indigenous artists to access funding. An interviewee expressed displeasure that all of the funding that they had been allocated was considered taxable income by Canada Revenue Agency:

> **"The CRA wants to see deductions and they're unhappy if you can't provide receipts and will audit your files. It makes it very difficult to do your taxes. I [also] think the budget template needs to be revisited because if I can't do it, others will struggle too."**
> **- Region 2 Participant**[27]

As a result, the taxation requirements of the Canadian government reduce the amount of funds artists have access to. While taxation is not in the immediate mandate of the Council, resources to support artists in navigating these challenges would be valuable. Artists and cultural carriers could benefit from more support and direction on how to account for taxation in their application budget. The interviewee quoted above further explained that if they received a grant for $5,000 from the Council, $4,000 of that may be allocated towards paying Elders for interviews, further complicating the ways in

26 Region 7 is comprised of the Great Lakes (including Robinson and Williams Treaties areas).

27 Region 2 is comprised of Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey territory (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Gaspé Peninsula).

which they could provide adequate documentation for their taxes. There is an overlap in concerns regarding the application budget, the funding needs of artists, and the taxation requirements of the government. Furthermore, several focus group participants brought up their experiences trying to navigate other streams of income, like disability support or pensions, while accessing grants. One participant explained the difficulties trying to ensure that Elders were properly compensated without jeopardizing their access to other financial resources. Resources are needed by artists to better reconcile these considerations.

Concerns were also raised by participants about the requirements the Council sets for how funding is allocated. Individuals need more information about the application process and how funding decisions are made. While, as previously mentioned, many participants did acknowledge that their one-on-one interactions with Council staff and program officers were pleasant and helpful, additional concerns were raised about the actual application process. Artists also almost universally felt that the application process of grants for both the Council and other funding bodies was too time consuming, confusing, and intimidating. Participants discussed that grant applications can be challenging. Participants also expressed that it can be difficult to make time for applications, especially for those with full-time jobs. Moreover, grant applications can be inaccessible – some artists without Western education in financing, grant writing, or the arts felt they lacked the vocabulary to successfully apply for funding or to successfully report post-funding. Additionally, it was expressed that some artists may have hesitations in applying for funding due to potential challenges accessing social benefits – for example, artists who receive disability support may lose that support if they acquire arts funding. Young artists expressed that they were unsure if they qualified for grants, either due to their artistic experience, or feeling as though they are taking funds from people who deserve or need it more. Consequently, artists identified that more opportunities for capacity building, such as jurying experience, would be useful for applicants. It should be noted that answers to many of the concerns raised by applicants can be found on the Council's website. However, participants often stated that they found the website confusing and difficult to navigate.

Survey participants who had never applied to the Council were asked to share why they had not yet applied. Of the respondents who chose to elaborate on why they had chosen not to apply or were unsure if they had applied, 33% stated that they were unaware of funding opportunities, 30% reported that they had been turned down previously or

were discouraged, 17% stated that they were not in need of funding, 13% had projects that were in development or not ready for the funding process, and 7% stated that there were issues around their identity that prevented them from applying.

A total of 373 participants responded to the question that asked whether they have applied for funding from the Council in the last three years; more than half of the participants (69.4%) indicated that they had applied for funding. The remaining 30.5% either had not applied for funding in the last three years (28.4%) or were not sure (2.14%). Of the participants that had either not applied for funding in the last three years or were unsure, 37% of respondents stated that "I did not think the funding programs were for me," 30% of respondents stated that "I do not have enough information about the Canada Council's programs," and 19% of respondents reported that they found the application process too complex.

Improving the application process for all Indigenous peoples goes beyond simply changing requirements to make the process less intimidating. Funding agencies and government agencies need to understand that dealing with institutions can be incredibly triggering for many Indigenous peoples. Survivors and descendants of survivors of the residential school system often struggle with even approaching an institution that is led by a colonial government:

> **"First Nations people, I believe, have had enough trauma. And we all suffer from some sort of trauma. And I just feel like this application process is so cumbersome, for people to come out of their shell and actually ask for help, and then they don't receive it. I really believe that the application process has to be simplified. It really has to be 'ABC.' I don't know how to do a 500-word essay on my project. I know I need four moosehide, I know I need canvas, I know I need 20 sets of beads, and thread and needles, and I'll go. But to explain the process of all of it and drag it into a 500-word essay? Yeah, I didn't know how to do it. I shut down. That application is so overwhelming. And I have anxiety and trauma. And First Nations people in general, we've all suffered. We've inherited trauma from this whole colonization process.**
>
> **These applications are just another part of the colonization process. They make it almost impossible for you to get it. Why do they have to make**

> **it a university level document for people who are just gifted artists that want to show their art and be supported? I can't even imagine what it's like for some really gifted people that just can't even fathom the idea of downloading an application and sitting there and filling it out without any support in the communities."**
> **- Region 12 Participant**[28]

In short, the effects of historic and ongoing colonialization have resulted in a sense of institutional trauma for many Indigenous peoples, especially Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Government agencies have a responsibility to acknowledge this trauma and to help Indigenous peoples navigate these colonial institutions.

Many found the Council's online portal confusing and did not like that applications had to be completed online. Online challenges stem from varying familiarity with computers as well as the inability to access the internet in many Indigenous communities. One participant suggested an audio alternative to written applications:

> **"Like a 7 to 10-minute audio pitch. That might help those who can explain their idea but when they put it on paper it falls flat. That would respect our oral traditions. It would make digital technology relevant in an oral culture."**
> **- Region 6 Participant**[29]

Overall, participants wanted the Council to explore ways in which the application process could be made more accessible to Indigenous applicants, including alternatives like mailing in hard copy applications or allowing audio files. Currently, applicants are able to submit audio components with their applications, but all other complex forms still need to be filled out, which does not eliminate the barrier. While alternatives and supports to access the online portal are available for applicants, many participants, even those who already have experience applying to Canada Council grants, are unaware these supports exist.[30] This points to a need to better advertise or promote these alternatives, using formats other than just online.

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28 Region 12 is comprised of the territories of all members of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

29 Region 6 is comprised of Tkaronto (Toronto).

30 For more information on support mechanisms for applicants please visit: Application Assistance | Canada Council for the Arts

These sentiments were largely echoed by survey participants, who indicated their preference for specific strategies that the Council should prioritize to better support Indigenous arts and cultures in Canada. Out of 14 suggestions provided in the survey, most participants selected more than one strategy. The majority of 374 participants indicated that they would like the Council to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications (63.9%), hold trainings and workshops for individuals and organizations (e.g., writing grants) (60.4%), promote Indigenous arts (59.9%), and support mentorship for emerging or aspiring artists (59.1%).

Gatekeeping and Professionalism

An additional theme that arose in many interviews and focus groups was the concern for gatekeeping at organizations like the Council:

> **"I think the professionalization of art is an antiquated idea. And it supports a kind of Eurocentric professionalization where you have to have certain kinds of training and certain kinds of exhibition experience and presentation experience that I don't think aligns with Indigenous creative practice on any level, so I think some of that needs to be dismantled. I think it freaks the Canada Council out because it's like, oh, you want us to lower our standards and lower the bar of what's acceptable, but I'm like, yeah, that's exactly what I think you should be doing. I think there's a lot of barriers, and those barriers are professionalized."**
> **- Region 6 Participant**[31]

In short, participants were concerned that many talented and worthy artists who could benefit greatly from funding from the Council were being left out of funding opportunities because they did not conform to Western standards of "fine art." It should be noted that the *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program at the Council approaches professionalism differently than other programs, in a way that is more inclusive of those who may not have formal education or experience. As with other issues, the general consensus was that if participants, including established artists, struggled with funding applications, then there would be many more Indigenous artists who would find the application process impossible.

31 Region 6 is comprised of Tkaronto (Toronto).

The *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program at the Council includes Cultural Carriers and Elders in their eligibility criteria, and is designed to be more accessible to those who may not have a formal education or extensive experience applying for grants. However, there is a distinct barrier for these people when they apply to other funding programs, including those at the Council. Such people include those in community who hold traditional knowledge, stories, images, and songs, and create space for artistic growth within the community. Ensuring that Indigenous artists can apply to any program at the Council is another step that should be taken to build relationships between the Council and Indigenous communities. A necessary step in this process is to ensure that assessment practices across all Council programs reflect a decolonial approach that facilitates Indigenous artists to create meaningful work. While cultural carriers within community may not express their knowledge using Western ideals of the arts, their responsibility to community and passing knowledge to the next generations is an integral part of community culture.

Another interviewee shared the challenges that they had faced trying to access support for their artistic endeavours as a survivor of the child welfare system and while navigating the shelter system in Toronto. This artist explained that it was difficult to acquire funds to make art and it was nearly impossible to find the space to make art while in the shelter system. Moreover, they felt it was difficult to succeed on grant applications without having experience, but it was difficult to gain experience without the proper funding for art supplies and studio space. This interviewee felt that if the Council were serious about supporting emerging artists, they could focus attention on Indigenous youth in the child welfare system, especially given the history of family separation as a means of dispossession for Indigenous peoples. This echoed many of the concerns raised by other participants who felt that more support should be given to emerging artists and those from more challenging economic backgrounds.

Supporting Applicants in Remote Communities

An additional facet in the discussion of access to funding that was brought up by numerous participants was the challenges that applicants faced in more remote areas. For instance, participants were concerned that many potential applicants could be excluded because they lacked reliable access to the internet to apply for funding.

In more remote areas, particularly the North, participants expressed unique challenges that affect different arts practices. Carvers are often in more remote communities that have poor or non-existent internet access and limited access to educational institutions. Performing artists in the northern Arctic regions are concentrated in Iqaluit, and often need funding to travel to remote communities and to southern parts of Canada. Musical expression can be inaccessible as there is a lack of instrument stores and repair shops in the North. Across practices, however, it was expressed that there is a lack of access to spaces to create and share their work. Artists suggested that more support needs to go towards arts and cultural centres, public galleries, performance venues, festivals, and trade shows. These spaces are important not only to create safe spaces for artists to work, but also to encourage collaboration amongst artists.

Participants also noted that organizations that aim to serve Indigenous peoples across Canada, often do not adequately address the specific needs of communities in the North, such as access to working spaces, gallery spaces, and partnerships with universities and other institutions. From the survey, when respondents were asked what kind of region they live and work in, 56% responded urban (in a city), 36% rural (in a small community), 13% suburban (in a community within commuting distant to a city) and 8% responded remote (in a community with limited or no road access). 10% of total respondents stated that they would like to see more support for remote artists.

Participants in a rural focus group expressed a desire to see a funding stream specifically for applicants in rural areas. Many felt that the current funding model heavily favoured artists located in urban centres, not necessarily in how much funding was awarded but in the additional obstacles that rural artists may face and what is valued in funding criteria. Participants expressed that they did not feel that rural or remote artists had access to the same opportunities, infrastructure, or networks as urban or southern artists and, as such, their applications should be evaluated differently:

> **"Rural artists should not have to compete with City artists for funds - the goals, understandings, and infrastructure is so different. How can rural artists meaningfully engage in the competitions of the [the Council] when they do not have access to the same legitimizing, review, and outside support of the work."**
> **- Region 12 Participant**[32]

Participants suggested that one way to help bridge this gap would be to partner with local community organizations to train representatives to help with applications, and to offer rolling intake instead of strict deadlines to help alleviate issues of unequal access to resources or reliable internet access. It should be noted that infrastructure in general, including healthcare, mental health services, and educational infrastructure is often lacking in many rural or remote areas, and is not only an issue for the arts.

Participants from other rural communities noted that the Council and other funding bodies have limitations on travel grants and capital expenditures, which result in major challenges for artists. Some travel grants are limited by distance, and only fund travel within a certain range. This is unhelpful and unrealistic for artists in remote communities. Participants expressed a desire for funders to acknowledge the lack of infrastructure in northern communities and improve grants by offering more funding to recognize greater travel distances and to support capital expenditures-related projects. One artist shared that they desired to build a recording studio in Attawapiskat but could not get project-based infrastructure funding. Participants noted that capital expenditures should be eligible, especially where these expenditures could benefit entire communities in the North. While sentiments regarding the accessibility of funding were most frequently expressed by artists living in remote and northern areas, artists in urban centres also expressed concern for artists in remote areas, even if it was not their own experience.

32 Region 12 is comprised of the territories of all members of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Language Support

Along with cultural teachings, artists also identified that language goes hand in hand with arts, and the two are integral to one another. Particularly when teachings and knowledges are not translatable to the English language, art is an avenue where teachings can be expressed. There is a push to revitalize language and traditional stories and teachings amongst artists as "language is our identity," and this can be supported through the arts. Due to colonization, many Indigenous peoples are not fluent language speakers, and the loss of Indigenous languages has impeded their ability to learn the language and traditional teachings. For some, the arts inspired them to (re)learn the language, and to use it in practice as much as possible. Even if they do not consider themselves proficient in the language, artists will incorporate language where possible, for example titling the art and naming pieces in their Indigenous language. Although some of their audiences may not understand, one participant stated that "it is not [the artist's] job to educate or to adhere to [non-Indigenous] comforts of understanding" (Quote from Region 2 Participant).

One participant stressed the importance of language by saying:

> **"Language is the breath of my art. I struggle with how to describe my story and my process in the English language. I'm not fluent in my own Indigenous language, but I have such a hard time to describe how I feel in English. It doesn't give it the justice I need to describe my work. One word in my language can paint a huge picture of who I am and what I'm doing. I tried to make that what leads my work. I want to chant because a lot of my music doesn't have words because I can't put it into English. I tell the Elders what I'm feeling, and they'll help me put it into words. That's how I've been learning my language. Word by word. Painting by painting. I need my language so much that my spirit weeps for it. It is the ultimate goal to be a fluent speaker."**
> **- Region 2 Participant**[33]

33 Region 2 is comprised of Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey territory (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, and Gaspe Peninsula).

Survey participants echoed sentiments on the importance and role of language in their art. 95% of respondents reported that their relationships to their Indigenous language(s) shaped and impacted their artistic or cultural practices. Some noted that their practices were directly informed by their relationship to their languages, while others noted the negative impacts of loss of language. Many participants are engaged in learning or re-learning their Indigenous languages, while some are fighting to preserve language through various means such as cataloguing and artistic representations.

The role that Indigenous language played in art varied among participants, but all felt that it was important to their art in some degree. Many artists also felt that art was an important avenue through which they could learn more of their language. Artists noted that there are challenges to learning their languages, especially when it might take time and concentration away from revenue making activities, as language is often not recognized by mainstream art funders as relevant or important.

Participants expressed their desire to see more support for language initiatives from funding agencies like the Council. When asked if they felt that the Council had a role to play in language promotion and revitalization, participants generally felt that they did. They agreed that the Council should allocate more resources for art that incorporated language. One participant felt that the Council should provide funding for artists to take classes to learn their language, if they could demonstrate that they would incorporate this knowledge into their art. It should be noted that the Council will currently fund language classes for professional development under the Small-Scale Activities component, although most participants were unaware of this support.

Focus group participants suggested that the Council could explore its role in language promotion and revitalization by offering funding specifically for translation services. Participants felt that aiding in the translation of artistic work would be beneficial for artists who wanted to explore the use of Indigenous language in their work. This could involve the translation of writing, music, film dialogue or subtitles, or supporting documentation like artist statements. Participants explained that if they themselves were not already fluent in their language, it would take up too much of their budget to hire a Knowledge Keeper or mentor to translate their work for them. In addition to helping with language preservation, retention, and reclamation, participants felt that supporting language development would help to create relationships amongst Indigenous artists:

> **"Many Indigenous artists are reclaiming our language, so the relationship is a partial one, living in two worlds of understanding. When I focus on projects that has language as a part of it, it's a reclamation in many ways, and difficult as you are multitasking, learning, and doing the project at the same time. Perhaps more funding to language-based projects. Focus on the language holders, elders, make programs that they can access easily to promote and transfer the language, collaborations between artists and those who know the language."**
> **- Region 9 Participant**[34]

Artists also felt that translating their work would be beneficial to them both as artists and to their broader communities because it would allow for further dissemination of their language and demonstrate it in use.[35] However, participants were clear that funding for translation needed to be funded separately from other project components, as paying for translation services is costly.

Mentorship Opportunities

A key theme that arose, particularly in focus groups, was the desire to see more mentorship opportunities. The environment of the focus groups fostered a more nuanced discussion than the survey and interviews and, in several instances, led to very fruitful examinations of the potential for the Council to foster more mentorship amongst Indigenous artists. As previously discussed, many artists felt that the grant application process can be intimidating and confusing, especially for young or emerging artists. Many people do not know where to start or who to turn to for assistance. Participants expressed confusion about aspects of the application like sourcing equipment to complete their application, navigating the online portal, or filling out their budgets. Participants expressed the importance of having someone to turn to who had

34 Region 9 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia, much of the Northwest Territories).

35 The Council has a specific component dedicated to translation and translation would also be an eligible expense under the *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program. While translation activities are supported by the Council, not all artists are aware of the support.

experience navigating these systems, such as an Indigenous person. New applicants felt that it would make the application process much less intimidating and more experienced artists felt they wanted to help younger Indigenous artists navigate this system. In short, both emerging and experienced artists felt that mentorship opportunities would benefit everyone involved, and that they were in line with the nurturing aspect of Indigenous ways of being.

From the survey, mentorship opportunities ranked in the top five strategies to further support Indigenous artists. When asked to indicate some strategies the Council can prioritize in the future to support Indigenous arts and cultures in Canada out of 14 suggestions, the majority of 374 participants indicated that they would like the Council to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications (63.9%), hold trainings and workshops for individuals and organizations (e.g., writing grants) (60.4%), promote Indigenous arts (59.9%), and create support mentorship for emerging or aspiring artists (59.1%).

While many artists spoke of positive experiences with the Council's program officers during the application process, some also wanted opportunities to collaborate with those who had more similar experiences in their life and career. While the Council may not be able to pair emerging and experienced Indigenous artists, the organization might consider other ways in which it could facilitate these experiences. For instance, the Council could create a list of willing and available mentors for Indigenous artists to contact. Artists cautioned against a funding model where mentors are purely voluntary and stressed that they should be financially compensated for their time and efforts:

> **"When an aspiring artist applies, I wish there was more mentorship. Other artists could be paid a stipend to mentor an aspiring artist. Both can work in tandem to flesh out their proposal. Both can learn in tandem through the application process. The [Council] is missing out and I think this is one way that they could support us."**
> **- Region 2 Participant**[36]

36 Region 2 is comprised of Mi'kmaki and Wolastoqey territory (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Gaspé Peninsula).

Furthermore, several participants called into question the efficacy of the current model used by the Council for aspiring artists, where artists have to find their own mentors to be allowed to apply for grants, instead of having a mentor supplied for them. Participants spoke of feeling discouraged because they did not have the connections necessary to acquire their own mentor, but could not apply for funding without one: "If you're a beginner, and you're supposed to have a mentor, how is that possible?" (Quote from Region 9 Participant).[37] Creating a list of available Indigenous mentors for emerging artists to contact would allow more young or less established Indigenous artists to apply for funding to support their art. It is acknowledged that the Council undertaking the work of pairing aspiring artists with mentors could be understood as a conflict of interest, however, it may be possible for this to be undertaken by an external organization or group.

Community Support and Relationships

While artists are starting to see a positive shift in the way mainstream funding agencies work with Indigenous peoples, there is still much work to be done. Many artists who were interviewed felt that a fundamental lack of understanding was at the root of problems between funding agencies and Indigenous artists. There is a general lack of understanding for Indigenous contexts, issues, and concerns, due to a lack of prioritizing and investing time in relationship-building with Indigenous artists. Funding agencies, as well as other arts organizations, must create cultures and structures that would make them accountable to Indigenous peoples.

From the survey, promotion of Indigenous arts ranked in the top three strategies to further support Indigenous artists. When asked to indicate some strategies the Council can prioritize in the future to support Indigenous arts and cultures in Canada out of 14 suggestions, the majority of 374 participants indicated that they would like the Council to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications (63.9%), hold trainings and workshops for individuals and organizations (e.g., writing grants) (60.4%), and promote Indigenous arts (59.9%).

37 Region 9 is comprised of Numbered Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (most of Saskatchewan, all of Alberta, Northeastern British Columbia and Northwest Territories).

Indigenous artists expressed that they often do not want to work with some (non-Indigenous) arts organizations and funding agencies, as employees or as collaborators, because they are not inclusive or safe spaces. In some instances, those who have worked for these organizations, noted feeling uncomfortable, unaccepted, and unsafe. This lack of comfort, acceptance, and safety is especially notable for 2SLGBTQIA+ artists. Nonetheless, many participants also shared stories of positive experiences working with arts organizations or funding agencies, and it should be noted that poor experiences are not universal. In general, participants shared that working with arts organizations and funding agencies felt safer when there were other Indigenous employees or contacts within them.

Participants who were invited to collaborate or work with non-Indigenous organizations often felt that these requests were performative and superficial – merely a box that needed to be checked – and generally did not have positive experiences. They noted that often, Indigenous peoples are brought into non-Indigenous organizations and are not fully supported, thus preventing them from doing meaningful work. There needs to be a willingness for organizations and funders to engage in a better understanding of their responsibility to work with and support Indigenous artists, in a manner that acknowledges traumas they may have experienced or continue to experience. In short, Indigenous peoples need to be at the forefront of the work that is being done regarding Indigenous issues in non-Indigenous organizations, and this work needs to be undertaken with genuine and ongoing change in mind. This will take time, yet mainstream organizations often prioritize simple and quick solutions that do not always address the issues at hand; this leaves Indigenous artists questioning mainstream organizations' commitments to the work. Organizations must therefore understand the hesitancy and concerns of Indigenous peoples to engage with them, particularly as there is a history of having negative impacts on Indigenous communities and Indigenous peoples.

A key theme that arose throughout the interview process was the need for communities to have greater autonomy and self-determination in the arts and culture sector. This means communities need the support to develop their own arts and cultural strategies. Artists expressed that at times, non-Indigenous organizations can micro-manage or tokenize Indigenous organizations and artists. With more Indigenous leadership, and more Indigenous spaces, Indigenous artists could focus artistic efforts on community priorities: reconnecting to land, culture, ancestors, and spirit; redress efforts; gift-giving; healing; infrastructure and capacity building. Furthermore, this could all be done according to Indigenous protocols - for example, more emphasis on Elder involvement or thoughtfulness around the use of alcohol at events.

Identity and Funding

In both the interview and focus group portions of this project, several participants raised concerns about who was eligible to access funding specified for Indigenous artists. Concerns were raised about artists who identified themselves as Indigenous but who may have had contentious claims to Indigenous identity or community.

Participants generally wanted to see more accountability from funding agencies and arts institutions regarding who they awarded money. A few participants called for more scrutiny around who is identified as Indigenous, particularly given the rise of the "Eastern Métis." This topic was particularly prevalent amongst participants from Quebec, although it was raised by participants from across the country. While it is necessary for funding agencies to monitor who is claiming Indigenous identity, there are also those who raise concerns about colonial funding agencies dictating who is Indigenous. For this reason, it is recommended to approach this issue in a way that centres Indigenous communities and their ways of being and knowing.

Concerns were raised about artists who identified themselves as Indigenous but who may have had contentious claims to Indigenous identity or community. These concerns were related to individuals who had no connection to an Indigenous community, claimed Indigenous identity based on a single Indigenous ancestor, fabricated claims to Indigeneity, or claimed membership to groups who themselves have questionable links to Indigeneity. Participants felt that an enhanced process for access to funding, perhaps including processes such as a letter of community support or a more rigorous series of questions, could be explored to ensure accountability.

Concerns surrounding identity were also repeatedly raised by survey participants. As with interview and focus group participants, survey respondents explained that too many non-Indigenous people were being awarded funding designed for Indigenous artists, and that this was hugely detrimental to legitimately Indigenous artists and communities. In addition to the above-mentioned suggestions regarding asking questions or requiring letters of community support, survey participants also suggested that more Indigenous peoples should sit on juries, as this would likely reduce the number of people who falsely claim Indigenous identity but still receive funding.

One interviewee, who had a significant amount of experience engaging with the Council, also raised a concern in relation to an assessment process they had participated in for a program that was not specifically for Indigenous artists and cultural carriers. This artist was concerned with the vagueness of a question about Indigenous traditional knowledge and intellectual property included in the grant application[38]:

> **"It's very vaguely written. It has no wording about responsibility. Non-Indigenous people don't know the protocols. It has to be more well-defined. It should be more clear and there should be more accountability, even when Indigenous people are applying, saying that they're using knowledge keepers. I need a letter with a signature."**
> **- Region 6 Participant**[39]

The concern raised by this interviewee is reflective of general concerns asserted by artists about a lack of accountability over who could claim to be Indigenous and how they could claim to use Indigenous knowledge.

38 The Council offers context briefs to peer assessment committees that provide information on the topic of cultural appropriation, among others: https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/funding-decisions/decision-making-process/application-assessment/context-briefs

39 Region 6 is comprised of Tkaronto (Toronto).

Part 4. Reconciliation: The Outcome of Truth

Reconciliation requires an understanding of the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. We cannot move forward into an era of reconciliation before we collectively acknowledge the truth of the historic and ongoing horrors of continued colonialism in Canada. Once the truth of this history is normalized within the Canadian mainstream, action with the goal of reconciliation will be a natural outcome.

It is important to make the distinction between reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization when creating a path forward for organizations that wish to improve their relationship with Indigenous communities in Canada. Reconciliation, a term that gained prominence in Canada because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), refers to establishing and maintaining a relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that is based on mutual respect and understanding. It is primarily a settler word and settler responsibility. Similarly, Indigenization is the process of changing spaces that are not generally Indigenous-centric to being spaces of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Nonetheless, it is a component of Indigenization to challenge the dominance of Western and Eurocentric thought and to centre decolonization within Indigenous approaches. Reconciliation is not possible without decolonization. Decolonization in this context refers to the process by which Indigenous peoples reclaim and reframe the dominant narrative and reassert themselves as a distinct identity. Decolonizing is about having Indigenous worldviews, governance, arts, and culture grow and exist unhindered and untethered to colonial systems. It is a process supported by Canada's adoption of the UNDRIP Bill C-15, which states that Indigenous peoples "have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions."[40] By consequence, this Canadian legislation also applies to the Council.

In Indigenous communities across Canada, arts and culture can be understood as the glue that holds a community together. Art is so much more than a practice, a skill, or a trade. Not only is art essential for Indigenous communities, but it is integral to their

40 Article 33 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

identities and ways of being. The art produced and shared by Indigenous peoples is a form of expression by both the community and the nation. We have seen from our national conversations and engagements that the development of Indigenous art and arts communities reaches further than one art piece, one event, or one genre. The strengthening and development of Indigenous art and art communities has an expansive impact, including but not limited to community-building, storytelling, cultural continuation, language revitalization, spirituality, knowledge sharing, and historical record keeping. Therefore, the Canada Council for the Arts and other arts funders have a critical role to play, and the value of funding for Indigenous arts cannot be overemphasized. Adequately supporting Indigenous artists means supporting Indigenous communities.

As highlighted earlier in this document under the "Setting the Stage" section, one of the recommendations from the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) was the creation of an Aboriginal Arts Council in parallel with the Canada Council for the Arts. As this organization does not yet exist, the relationship between Canada Council for the Arts and Indigenous communities, artists, and organizations must persist in its place. Even with the creation of a new, Indigenous funding body, existing organizations like the Council still have a duty to improve their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Below are the outcomes that surfaced throughout this engagement process and suggestions for the continued value of arts funding for Indigenous communities.

Ownership

As outlined in this report, the role of arts in the lives of Indigenous peoples is all-pervasive and intricately connected to culture. Within Indigenous cultures are worldviews that are distinct from that of the greater Canadian context. Ownership is understood as a collective stewardship and responsibility rather than an individual right. In Indigenous cultures, collective rights extend across generations, and imbue the holder with cultural obligation and culpability. This concept makes it clear that support for Indigenous artists is intrinsically linked to support for broader Indigenous communities as entire families and communities are involved.

The colonial notion that Indigenous artists individually own their arts, stories, songs, dances, and designs is incongruous with what was expressed by the Indigenous community, which explained that artistic ownership is a collective not individualistic idea. One artist explained that when they were first learning their art, their family took them aside and explained which images belonged to their clan. They were instructed not to use the images of other clans but only those images their family held in trust for future generations. If another artist took those images and used or patented them, they would be in violation of clan laws.

Contrary to Western conceptions of copyright ownership, which grants individual ownership based on the idea that work originates from one or a few authors, artistic rights and ownership are much more nuanced and often exist communally for Indigenous peoples. This is in line with the results of the 2019 report "Statutory Review of the Copyright Act." A recommendation was made to (re)develop the copyright regime in Canada through working with Indigenous people to nationally develop institutional, regulatory, and technological means to recognize and protect Indigenous artistic interests and cultural expressions and to ensure Indigenous peoples have authority on overprotective measures.[41] These recommendations coincide with what participants expressed throughout all aspects of this project; namely, that current concepts of individually based rights are incongruent with Indigenous community-based stewardship concepts, and there must be legislative mechanisms to protect the autonomy and agency of Indigenous arts and cultures.

Participants were clear that the disconnection in views of artistic rights and ownership causes continuous harm and confusion for them, which negatively impacts the relationship between public funding and Indigenous arts and cultures. Although the Council does not play a role in copyright or artistic ownership, participants did share a desire to see a new path towards the recognition, acceptance, and effective protection of Indigenous cultural and artistic expressions. Participants expressed a desire to see the Council actively advocate for them in this regard and help them navigate these oftentimes complicated systems.

When survey participants were asked how Indigenous cultural expression can be protected, 88% spoke to the importance of artistic rights and ownership as an integral part of protecting Indigenous cultural expressions. Respondents proposed a variety

41 https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/INDU/report-16/page-87#_ftn32

of solutions for protecting artistic rights and ownership, including paying royalties to nations when their designs are used, developing legislation to protect Indigenous intellectual property, and using education rather than punitive measures when Indigenous cultural expressions are appropriated. One respondent noted that the concept of cultural appropriation is based in the individualism of Eurocentrism and is not rooted in the teachings of the Elders, which are based on sharing and reciprocity. Respondents spoke to the inherent complexity within discussions of cultural appropriation.

Accountability

Across the entire project, participants spoke passionately about the desire to strengthen relations between funding agencies and Indigenous artists and communities. The foundation of this must be one of equal footing, where accountability, transparency, and trust are considered necessary. Indigenous artists, community members, and organizations have insisted on the need for arts and cultural strategies to be community based, meaning the support must come from the community.

Many participants expressed a need for guidelines for grant applicants that insist on Indigenous participation throughout the granting process regardless of whether the funding is project or core based. Many non-Indigenous national, regional, and local arts organizations have received funding to complete projects on Indigenous issues or arts practices without consultation or participation of the Indigenous community. This practice allows these non-Indigenous organizations to tokenize, or misrepresent Indigenous artists.

There is a genuine need for relationship building between funding agencies and Indigenous communities. This includes the need for real accountability and spaces where Indigenous artists feel safe. Storytelling is the way relationships are built and knowledge is transferred within community. Taking one piece of a story or one part of an artistic expression and expecting it to work in a large institution is not relationship building. Yet this is the very action that many participants described when discussing their experiences with non-Indigenous institutional or organizational partnerships. They questioned how mainstream organizations work together: How did those relationships work? What were they based on? Why couldn't they, as Indigenous artists, be shown the same level of respect and integrity?

Support for Indigenous artistic leaders including Indigenous administrators, program officers, and peer assessors would promote equitable funding and financial stability in community-based organizations. Outreach for peer assessors, professional development and networking opportunities for Indigenous arts administrators, and inclusion of Indigenous funding program officers needs to be a priority not only of the Council but for all arts funders across Canada.

Awareness

When funding agencies are working to build relationships with Indigenous communities and Indigenous peoples, it is important to develop an understanding of their specific histories. This is a step that all agencies and organizations, especially ones that work within the federal government, must undertake. Understanding the histories of diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is integral to being able to undertake meaningful and honest work with them.

This effort must be a continued and ongoing practice and must include a trauma-informed approach. Program officers need to be educated on the various Indigenous nations across Canada, and the challenges and barriers that they face. This could be accomplished through workshop series, professional development, or support of education initiatives. Prior education and awareness of Indigenous communities could also become part of the hiring criteria for all program officers and others who work with the public. Understanding the barriers that Indigenous peoples face and the legislation that caused the current lack of opportunities, as well as the need for Indigenous-specific funding will help interactions between the Indigenous community and funders grow into healthy relationships. Many participants shared how they had pleasant and helpful experiences with program officers at the Council, which points to efforts that have been made to ensure that Indigenous applicants are treated respectfully. Nonetheless, this was not the case for all funding agencies and arts organizations, and this is something that these groups need to address.

Relationship Building

Through the series of conversations held throughout this project, it is clear that there is room for the development of better relationships between funding agencies and the various Indigenous communities, artists, and organizations across Canada. In order to develop a relationship with Indigenous communities, artists, and organizations, it is necessary for the agencies to understand the rocky terrain that they are moving through.

Funding agencies have to balance the relationship between supporting the development of Indigenous arts, cultures, and artists while also maintaining enough distance so as not to infringe upon individual and group Indigenous self-determination. Inherent within the relationship between funding agencies and applicants is a power imbalance. As a result, there is the possibility of unjust and undue influence that can hinder the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Funding agencies need to be mindful of this imbalance.

To correct this imbalance there needs to be an ongoing commitment to awareness, education, and trust building. Many participants felt that there was a lack of information sharing and outreach conducted by funding agencies. There was an overall sense of inaccessibility to obtaining information about grants and the application process. Although this information is accessible through the Council's website, the barrier remains for those without internet access. The lack of feedback on applications was another factor that led many to abandon any attempts to apply. Not knowing why their application was denied lead to a feeling of helplessness. Not understanding the Council's online portal, not having access to computers, or not knowing a paper application is accepted also lead many to believe they could not apply.

These misconceptions need to be addressed in community. Relationship building to many participants meant knowing their program officer's first name, where they were from, and how they came to work at their organization. They need to feel comfortable in contacting program officers to discuss their project. They need to know that if new information is available, they would be informed, not just left to discover it on the website. Outreach, communication, and taking the time to speak with people has to become a priority. These perspectives were shared amongst a wide range of participants, but they were especially prevalent amongst those who had not yet received funding from the Council. This illustrates how funding agencies could do a better job with outreach for new applicants and could help them more in the application process.

Part 5. A Path Forward

This report has illustrated that the impact of public funding for the Indigenous arts sector is expansive. Not only does public funding provide the foundation of support for arts projects, arts events, and arts organizations, but it also provides a space for the continuation and growth of Indigenous cultures and practices that have been surviving under the historically oppressive mechanisms of Canadian colonialism. The public arts sector can be understood as a playing field for the navigation of reconciliation and decolonization that is greatly needed in Canada today.

The Council has been working to address the arts sector's shortcomings, inconsistencies, and injustices. With the establishment of the 2021-26 Strategic Plan, the Council has stated ambitious goals for its role in the improvement of the arts sector in Canada. While acknowledging those efforts, this section asks the Council to delve further into how those goals can be completed with respect to Indigenous peoples and further improve the value of public funding for the Indigenous arts sector.

Collaboration, Community Connections, and Ongoing Relationship Building

The direction of the Council's Strategic Plan 2021-26 includes nurturing and expanding collaboration and partnerships. The types of collaboration the Council highlights includes other sectors within Canada, international partners, and relationships with the North. The Council can further expand this initiative in the following ways:

1. Develop partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations serving the Indigenous arts sector with the objective of mutual and ongoing support. These relationships must be in consultation with Indigenous communities. In consultation means meeting the various Indigenous organizations or communities at their level by codeveloping expectations and outcomes, creating partnerships based on respect and mutual benefit, taking an individual approach to each partnership, and reassessing the partnership as needed or at regular intervals. These partnerships can include urban and rural, and potentially partners as re-granters and community liaisons.

2. Collaborate with Indigenous artists and communities to support and/or develop mentorship opportunities between experienced Indigenous artists/cultural carriers and emerging artists/cultural carriers.
3. Increase support for Indigenous arts administrators. The role of the Council could be to facilitate funding for operations for Indigenous arts organizations, as well as training on operations (administration, accounting), expansion (outreach, networking), and funding acquisition (grant writing). This could also include supporting an Indigenous administrator network or association, forums, or annual conferences.

The North

A number of the directions from the Council's strategic plan and actions make commitments to the North. Currently, the focus for actions related to the North is on digital access, increased presence of the Council, and support for artistic activity. In addition to this, the Council is to develop a Northern Arts Strategy in the coming years.

4. Develop distinct funding for rural and northern Indigenous artists/cultural carriers and Indigenous organizations. The creation of distinct funding can aid these artists and organizations in the following ways:
    - Adjust the application criteria to account for differing professional benchmarks between remote and urban artists.
    - Address the limited artistic infrastructure in the North. This could include funding expansion to include studios, art galleries, recording studios, and centres.
    - Account for larger travel costs for artists
5. Develop a partnership for delivery of funds and support to the North either with arts funding organizations or Indigenous arts organizations and communities to avoid any redundancies in programming. Outline the roles, goals, and specific actions of the collaboration of funders and make this publicly available.
6. Adjust operations mechanisms to address the cultural and regional realities of remote and northern communities. This could include the creation of community liaisons and officers that meet artists and organizations in their region to aid with grant applications, modifying application deadlines to be on a rolling basis to account for communication disconnect.

Language and Culture

Direction 1 from the 2021-26 Strategic Plan actions aims to better understand the barriers faced by official language minorities and promises to allocate $100 million of funding over the next 5 years to Indigenous art and cultures. The Council can further consider the protection and support of Indigenous languages in the following ways:

7. Integrate the understanding that Indigenous language use and the arts are integral to one another, therefore the separation of arts activities and language activities can provide a challenge for Indigenous artists and organizations. The Council should provide support and additional funding for Indigenous language protection and resilience. This includes supporting Indigenous language learning, language teaching, and incorporation into art projects/initiatives.
8. Expand funding criteria to include projects where artists desire Indigenous language translation, ensuring that projects can be accessed by Indigenous populations. This will help with the large cost of translation services.
9. The Council should consider developing funding mechanisms for cultural activities. This must be done thoughtfully, in close collaboration, and in consultation with Indigenous knowledge keepers, cultural carriers and Elders.

Funding

Direction 1 from the 2021-26 Strategic Plan actions strive to improve access to funding for historically underserved and marginalized communities, including Indigenous artists. The Council can further expand this initiative in the following ways:

10. Commit to researching, developing, and further clarifying Indigenous eligibility requirements for funding. Eligibility requirements should be concurrent with Indigenous governance mechanisms. It may be useful to integrate *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* eligibility requirements. Ensure those who can apply to the *Creating, Knowing, and Sharing* program can also access other Council programs in a decolonized approach related to the assessment and funding allocation.

11. Further allocate distinct financial support for emerging and exploring artists/cultural carriers and Indigenous organizations and expand funding eligibility for emerging/aspiring artists. The Council already has a specific profile for new and early career artists and the *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program supports aspiring artists, however, there is a requirement that the aspiring artist must be working under the mentorship of a professional artist. This can be limiting for new Indigenous artists. Further the fields of practice for new and early career artists do not include criteria for Indigenous arts. Expanding the fields of practice to include Indigenous art forms could aid in providing funding for new Indigenous artists.
12. Broaden funding to include capital investments, such as funding for artists to obtain arts related infrastructure and upkeep; travel costs especially to and from remote and northern areas; necessary arts related materials (including cameras, computers, and other relevant instruments).
13. Conduct further analysis of application success rates and determine approaches that will be implemented to ensure that as many applications from Indigenous applicants as possible can have a significant portion of their application funded.

Accessibility, Awareness, and Outreach

Accessibility, awareness, and outreach is a hurdle for any organization. From this research, it has become evident that there is a clear disconnect and lack of awareness of the available resources, programs, initiatives, and grants available for Indigenous artists and organizations at maturity.

14. Create a user-friendly application and guidelines that include alternative communication forms such as oral recordings or videos. Provide resources that assist the application process such as tutorial videos. Improve the mail-in application process by first ensuring applicants know it exists as an option and streamlining the process by omitting excessive paperwork.
15. Improve awareness and understanding of and education about the Council's programs. This includes available funding; applications; tools; and resources that are available for Indigenous artists, arts administrators, and cultural carriers in all Indigenous communities.

16. Improve accessibility of the webpage with a focus on guiding applicants. This could include developing a grant filtering system that shows potential applicants the funding opportunities they are eligible for after a short set of questions, modifying the webpage to simplify navigation (smaller photos, more information per page), and clearly stating the running dates of grants and initiatives.
17. Design a Web Portal that includes clear forms and other Council related materials to simplify the application process and ensure necessary information is easily available. These materials can include but are not limited to notifications, guidelines, and application forms.
18. Create a system for offering feedback to unsuccessful grant applicants. This can support applicants in developing their grant application skills and contribute to possible future successful applicants. This could replace the current feedback categorization system of successful, recommended, and unsuccessful, which participants found to be unhelpful.

Indigenous Rights, Reconciliation, and Decolonization

The creation of the *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* program is intended to affirm the UNDRIP and uphold the principles of reconciliation outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The {Re}conciliation initiative was the Council's answer to the Truth and Reconciliation's Call to Action #83, calling for the establishment, as a funding priority, of a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process. The Council is commended for these efforts, but is encouraged to continue to respond and act on these points:

19. Create a mechanism for determining success in initiatives responding to the TRC and the UNDRIP. Publicly share the mechanisms for measurement of success and the outcomes of measurement.
20. Further expand initiatives that address Call to Action #83 from the TRC. This could include allocating more funding, re-establishing the {Re} concilation initiative, or establishing a new initiative.

21. Advocate for Indigenous rights. This could include advocating for Indigenous sovereignty regarding taxation of grants, taxation rights, double taxation, and taxed on subsistence.
22. Ensure Indigenous approaches and understanding of culture and Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights are respected and upheld. This could include an initiative to decolonize understanding of ownership, where works of art can be owned by a community. Additionally, support Indigenous communities and artists to understand copyrights, community's rights, and navigation of the property right realm to protect collective ownership of art.
23. Accelerate the journey of decolonization at the Council by ensuring ongoing inclusion and representation of Indigenous peoples at all levels within the Council. Continue to increase diversity and representation at the Council and leverage the diversity of voices at the Council. This can be done by restructuring eligibility criteria and creating professional development opportunities.
24. Continue to answer all arts and culturally related calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the UNDRIP.
25. Advocate for the timely integration of UNDRIP at all levels of government.
26. Advocate for the answering of all Calls to Action from Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Conclusion

Archipel Research and Consulting Inc., in collaboration with the Canada Council for the Arts, conducted a national research study to understand the role and importance of arts and culture to Indigenous communities from across Canada, and the value of public funding for Indigenous arts and cultures. From August 2020 to September 2021, interviews, focus groups, and an online survey were conducted with Indigenous artists, organizations, cultural carriers, and Elders from twelve regions across Canada.

Participants unanimously expressed arts and cultural practices are deeply interwoven with Indigenous ways of being. Indigenous arts and cultures are a venue that fosters language revitalization, community-building, storytelling, cultural continuity, among many others essential functions for Indigenous communities. Public funding is integral to the success of Indigenous artists, arts, and culture. Public funding has allowed Indigenous artists to undertake meaningful artistic and cultural work that they otherwise would not have been able to do. Providing adequate support to Indigenous artists causes a ripple effect of positive change throughout Indigenous communities. This effect can greatly contribute to efforts of reconciliation and decolonization.

While public funding for Indigenous artists is integral to their success, many have faced barriers and challenges to accessing the funding and support that they need. Indigenous artists and cultural carriers expressed the desire to grow a better, more sustainable relationship with public institutions and, specifically, the Canada Council for the Arts. Opportunities for growth came to light, such as access to funding opportunities; gatekeeping and professionalism; supporting applicants in remote communities; language support; mentorship opportunities; and identity and funding.

Finally, this report offered 26 recommendations for the Canada Council for Arts to undertake to improve their support for Indigenous artists across the country. The recommendations centre around the themes of community connection; the North; language; funding; accessibility and outreach; and Indigenous Rights, Reconciliation, and Decolonization, offering a clear framework by which the Council can continue to improve its relationship with Indigenous peoples and strengthen the value of public funding. As the Council begins it next steps on the path forward, it's actions and initiatives will greatly influence how the arts sector, arts funders, and government agencies can better support Indigenous peoples and communities. The recommendations and findings from this report signal to all arts and cultures organizations across Canada the path forward, as it is a required and shared responsibility to revitalize, protect, and preserve Indigenous arts and cultures.

Appendix

Interview Guide

Hello, Bonjour, my name is _____, and I am a researcher with Archipel Research, an Indigenous owned and operated research company. We are working with the Canada Council for the Arts to conduct a national research study on the importance of arts and culture to Indigenous communities and the impact of public funding for Indigenous arts and cultures. This interview will ask you to reflect on your arts and cultural practices, Indigenous arts and cultures in general, and how public funders can better support Indigenous arts and cultures.

I will ask you 9 questions, along with series of sub-questions to clarify or explore ideas further. Completing this interview is voluntary: you can end your participation at any time and are not required to answer any or every question. When the interview is complete, I will send you a copy of the notes I have taken for you to verify or correct them. You also have up to 14 days from today to withdraw your participation. Once Archipel has completed a series of interviews, a regional report will be written. This report will be sent to you and you will then have a 2-week period to review and provide any feedback before it is finalized.

Do you have any questions?

Are you ready to begin the interview?

1. **Getting to know the artist/culture carrier: Tell us about yourself.**
    a. What community/nation are you from? Who are your relations?
    b. What does it mean to you to be an artist? What does this look like for you?

2. **These next questions are about your journey with arts, culture, and creativity.**
    a. Did you grow up around artists and culture carriers, and if so, how did they inspire or influence you?
    b. Were you trained or educated in your art form(s) or cultural practice?
    c. Were you mentored, taught, or apprenticed in your form of art or cultural expression?
    d. How did you find that experience as it relates to what you are doing today?

3. **What does arts and culture look like in your family and your community? How do you see the role of arts and culture in your community? This can include your nation, territory, current place of residence, or home community.**
    a. How has this changed over time?
    b. How do you see it changing in the future?

4. **The next set of questions look at your experience, relationships, and opinions of art organizations.**
    a. What has been your experiences with Indigenous art organizations? (This may include programming, representation, access)
    b. How does your experiences with non-Indigenous arts organizations differ?
    c. In your opinion, what is the role of arts organizations in fostering and supporting artists and Indigenous arts and cultures in Canada?
    d. What role would you like to see Indigenous arts organizations play in the future?

5. **Do you apply for grants or funding from arts funders?**
    a. If not, why not?
    b. If so, what has been your experience accessing support through arts funders (e.g., the Council)?
    c. How can funders (e.g., the Council) best support you as an Indigenous artist?
    d. What would you like to see the relationship between Indigenous peoples and arts funders (e.g., the Council) look like moving forward?

6. **How would you describe your relationship with Indigenous languages as part of arts and culture?**

7. **What role would you like to see Indigenous languages play in Indigenous arts and cultures in the future?**

   Prompts: language revitalization, language promotion, the use of language

8. **What is your understanding of artistic rights and ownership?**

   Prompts: cultural appropriation, intellectual property rights, community rights, Western conceptions of property

   a. How can these rights be protected?

      Prompts: what identity categories are important to you? How would you like to see this information used?

9. **Tell us about where you would like to see Indigenous arts and cultures on this land go in the future.**

   Additional sub-questions:

   a. Are you familiar with the term decolonization? Is this part of your practice? What would it mean to decolonize the arts and cultures sector?
   b. Are you familiar with the term indigenization? Is this part of your practice? What would it mean to indigenize the arts and cultures sector?
   c. Do you have any other ways of describing the change that you would like to see in the arts and cultures sector?

These are all the questions I have for you, is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation. We will follow up with you with notes from our discussion and provide opportunities for you to provide feedback, or to let us know if you would like to withdraw from the study. We will also share with you the results from this study once they are available. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact us anytime.

Focus Group Guide

1. **What is one reason why Indigenous arts and cultures are important to you?**

2. **Preamble: The Council provides specific funding programs to Indigenous communities within the *Creating, Knowing and Sharing* Program. This program is designed to be more accessible to Indigenous communities through establishing funding criteria that highlights lived experience, as well as opportunities for Elders and cultural carriers to apply for funding. These criteria are in contrast to other funding programs which emphasize professional training over lived experience.**

   Question: How could the Canada Council better meet the diverse needs of Indigenous communities for arts and cultural initiatives and programming?

   a. How could Canada Council better its commitment specifically to those in remote or rural areas?
   b. How can Canada Council better support aspiring and/or emerging artists and art professionals?

      Prompts: support for application process, outreach, relationship building, cultural leadership development, programs and initiatives, etc.

3. **What is needed in order to create a stronger relationship between Indigenous artists, Elders, cultural carriers, and arts institutions?**

   Prompts: examples of this can be network building, community-organization partnerships, and relationships with Indigenous organizations and the creation of Indigenous arts institutions.

4. **How does your relationship with your Indigenous language shape or influence your art forms or cultural practices?**

   a. How can arts and culture organizations better support language learning and retention?
   b. How can funders best support language learning and retention?

5. **Do you see any gaps that we are not addressing?**

Survey

Canada Council for the Arts

Indigenous Arts and Cultures Survey

Archipel Research and Consulting Inc., an Indigenous owned and operated research company, is working with the Canada Council for the Arts to conduct a national research study on the importance of arts and culture to Indigenous communities and the impact of public funding for Indigenous arts and cultures.

Your participation is essential to the success of this project. This survey will be used to understand the role of arts and culture to Indigenous communities. With your participation we can build stronger relationships between the Canada Council for the Arts, Indigenous artists, arts professionals, cultural carriers, and Indigenous communities, and we can improve access to arts and cultures funding.

Completing this survey is voluntary. Your responses on this survey will be analyzed and gathered into a report to be shared publicly in 2021. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

In order to prioritize Indigenous artists, there are some questions specific to the Indigenous nation(s) and communities with which you identify. These questions will be mandatory to ensure the accuracy of the survey results. The remaining questions in this survey will be optional.

Please tell us about yourself

1. **Please select your affiliation (you can select more than one):**
    - First Nations
    - Inuit
    - Métis
2. **With which specific Nation(s) or communities do you identify?**
3. **Is there another cultural community with whom you identify?**
4. **What is your place of residence? (name of city, First Nation community, Métis Settlement, town, hamlet, or other place where you live)**

5. **In what kind of region do you live and work: (select one or more options)**
    - Urban (in a city)
    - Suburban (in a community within commuting distance to the city)
    - Rural (in a small community)
    - Remote (in a community with limited or no road access)

Part A: Your Artistic and Cultural Practice

This section will ask you a few questions about your artistic and/or cultural practice. Please use the response options provided for each question and answer as many questions as you feel comfortable.

We will ask a few more questions about your background near the end of the survey.

1. **Which of the following best describes your role in arts and culture? (select one)**
    - Artist
    - Arts and culture organization staff member
    - Arts or cultural professional (e.g. agents, curators, producers)
    - Elder, Knowledge Keeper or cultural carrier
    - Educator, instructor, or researcher
    - Other

2. **Please describe, in a few words, your role in arts and culture:**

3. **Which fields of artistic and cultural practice are most relevant to you? Select one or more choices below.**
    - Circus Arts
    - Contemporary Dance
    - Customary/Traditional Dance
    - Contemporary Music and Sound
    - Customary/Traditional Music and Sound
    - Contemporary Performance Art
    - Customary/Traditional Performance Art
    - Contemporary Visual Arts
    - Customary/Traditional Visual Arts
    - Culinary Arts

- Cultural Knowledge Transfer
- Deaf and Disability Arts
- Design
- Digital Arts
- Fashion
- Film
- Inter-Arts
- Land-based Practices
- Literature
- Media Arts
- Multidisciplinary Activities
- Storytelling
- Theatre
- Other

4. Please describe, in a few words, your artistic and cultural practices:

5. How did you learn your current artistic or cultural practice? Select all that apply.

- Elders or cultural carriers
- Parents, family, or other relations
- Self-taught
- Lessons or classes
- Academy or other disciplinary program
- Arts or cultural apprenticeship or mentorship
- Post-secondary institution
- Other

6. Are you affiliated or involved with any arts and culture organization, group, or collective? (select one)

- Indigenous organizations, groups, or collectives
- Non-Indigenous organizations, groups, or collectives
- Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, groups, or collectives
- I am not affiliated or involved with any organization, group, or collective

7. Please describe your involvement in these organizations:

8. How long have you been practicing your artistic or cultural practice?

- Less than one year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

9. Please tell us how you share your artistic or cultural practice: (select one or more options below)

- I share my work with others in my community
- I share my work with the general public
- I share my work across Canada
- I share my work internationally
- I do not publicly share my work

Part B: Indigenous Arts and Cultures

The next section will ask you a few questions about the importance of Indigenous arts and cultures for you and your community. Please use the response options provided for each question.

1. Please select the statements below that are most important to you. (Please select up to 5 priorities)

Indigenous arts and cultures are important to me because they can...

- Bring people together
- Challenge and resist colonialism
- Contribute to preservation and revitalization of traditional knowledge and languages
- Transfer knowledge across generations
- Contribute to health and well-being within a community
- Contribute to personal health and well-being
- Contribute to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty
- Create a connection to land and other living beings
- Expand knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures and realities
- Facilitate learning and discovery

- Make a broader contribution to society
- Make an economic contribution to communities and society
- Promote engagement of children and youth with their culture
- Provide personal enjoyment
- Share Indigenous cultures with other communities
- Support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- Other

2a. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: Indigenous arts and cultures play a significant role in my community.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

2b. Please elaborate on the role Indigenous arts and cultures play in your community:

3. How does your relationship with your Indigenous language(s) shape and impact your artistic or cultural practices?

4. Artistic rights and ownership by both individuals, communities, and nations is a complex subject. There are often divides between Indigenous and Western notions of intellectual property, ownership and how arts and culture are shared. How can Indigenous cultural expressions be protected? (e.g. artistic rights and ownership, cultural appropriation, etc.) Please explain in the space provided:

Part C: Public funding for Indigenous Arts and Cultures

The following section will ask you a few questions about your experiences with Canada Council for the Arts funding and how the Council could best support Indigenous arts and cultures going forward. Please use the response options provided for each question.

1. Have you applied for funding from Canada Council for the Arts in the past three years?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2. Why haven't you applied for Canada Council's funding programs? Please select all that apply.

- I am not eligible for Canada Council's funding
- I use other sources to fund my art
- I find the Canada Council's application process too complex
- I cannot find a Canada Council program that meets my needs
- I do not have enough information about Canada Council's programs
- I did not think the funding programs were for me
- I did not want to take resources that could be given to others
- Other
- I don't know / rather not answer

3. Have you received funding from Canada Council for the Arts in the past three years?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

4. What are some strategies the Canada Council can prioritize in the future to support Indigenous arts and cultures in Canada?

Check all that apply.

- Training and workshops for individuals and organizations (e.g., writing grants)
- Providing feedback on unsuccessful applications
- Application materials in Indigenous languages
- Support for language and cultural revitalization

- Hiring local liaisons to support communities with accessing funding
- Promoting awareness of programs
- Promotion of Indigenous arts
- Funding to support professional development for organizations and arts professionals
- Building networks and partnerships within the arts sector
- Building networks and partnerships outside the arts sector
- Supporting digital projects
- Supporting mentorship for emerging or aspiring artists
- I don't know / rather not answer

5a. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: (please select one) Support from the Canada Council for the Arts has had a positive impact on my artistic and cultural practice.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

5b. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: (please select one) Support from the Canada Council has made a positive difference in my community.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

5c. **Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: (please select one) The Canada Council for the arts provides valuable support for Indigenous arts and cultures.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

6. **Please describe what you would like to see from Canada Council for the Arts to best support Indigenous arts and cultures in the coming years.**

Please explain in the space provided.

Part D: General Demographics Questions

This final set of questions will ask you a few more details about yourself. The information will be used to better understand the diversity of those who responded to this survey. Please use the response options provided for each question and answer as many questions as you feel comfortable.

1. **What is your gender identity? (select all that apply)**

- Trans
- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Two-Spirit
- Genderqueer
- Agender
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

2. **Do you identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to answer

3. **What is your primary language:**
    - English
    - French
    - Indigenous or other language
    - Prefer not to answer

4. **How old are you?**
    - under 18
    - 18-34
    - 35-44
    - 45-54
    - 55-64
    - 65-74
    - 75+
    - Prefer not to answer

5. **Do you identify as someone who is Deaf, partially deaf or hard of hearing?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to answer

6. **Are you a person with a disability? For the purposes of this questionnaire, disability includes persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment or chronic illness.**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to answer

7. **Did you complete an interview with Archipel Research & Consulting for the research on the value of public funding for Indigenous arts and cultures?**
    - Yes
    - No

(After clicking submit)

Thank you for completing this survey!

Upon the completion of this survey, you'll be entered into a draw to win a gift basket that includes a prepaid visa and Indigenous created products with a total value of $500.

Please note that Archipel Research and Consulting is organizing the draw and the winner will be drawn at random.

The draw dates are May 28th, June 28th, and July 28th.

To be entered into the draw, please enter your name and email below. If you do not wish to be entered into the draw simply write "no."

_____

☐ I would like to receive updates on this research or be contacted for additional opportunities to be involved.

- Yes, please
- No, thanks

  Name: _____

  Email Address: _____

For more information on how Canada Council for the Arts supports the arts and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, please visit: https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/grants/creating-knowing-sharing

Regional Map

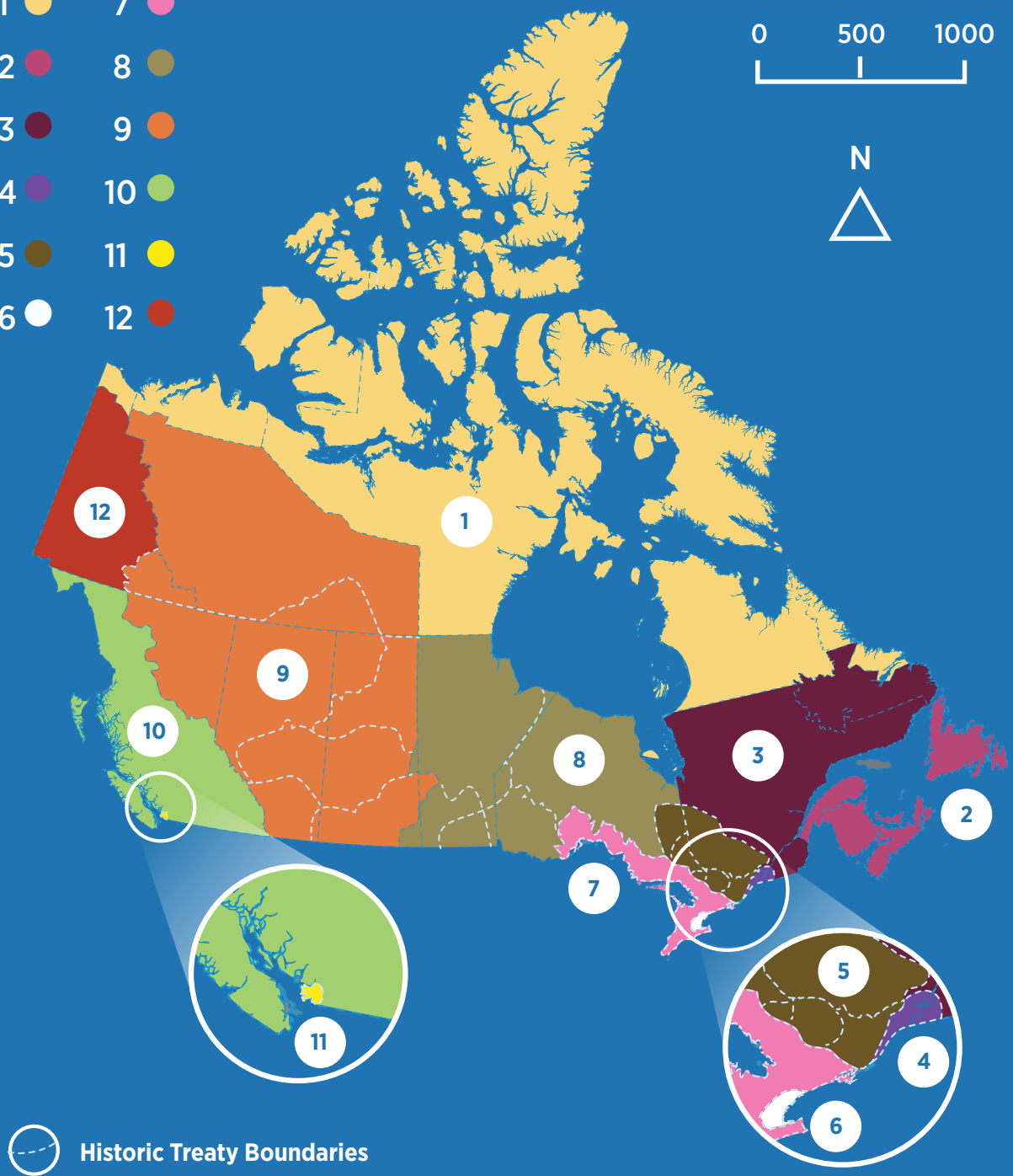
CANADA

Research Regions:

1 7
2 8
3 9
4 10
5 11
6 12

KM
0 500 1000

N



Historic Treaty Boundaries

Provincial Borders