



# ARTS & CULTURE FOR ALL MANITOBANS



2021-2023 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# INTRODUCTION

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Following a call to modernize cultural funding programs made in the provincial government's 2019 *Our Way Forward: Manitoba's Culture Policy and Action Plan*, the Manitoba Arts Council (MAC) was charged with responsibility for programs and clients that were formerly administered by the Arts Branch of the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage. Many of these clients work in the area of community-engaged arts – art making that is of and by the people and a place, sometimes facilitated by a professional artist, and often organized and run by volunteers. Most of these clients are outside of Winnipeg and some have an arts and/or a cultural focus.

The transfer of these programs and clients to MAC, which has long been home to our professional artists and organizations, is a historic opportunity to see Manitoba's arts and cultural sector in a more holistic manner, and to revisit funding models and patterns through the lens of "Arts and Culture for all Manitobans." This document, which outlines a new vision, purpose, and values for the Manitoba Arts Council, along with new strategic priorities, provides the framework for the work ahead.

*Art and culture are inextricably linked. MAC sees art as an integral component of culture and supports cultural expression with an artistic component. This is sometimes represented in the use of the words "art or arts" in this document.*



# FOUNDATION

Art tells our stories, challenges our thinking, and creates conversations to better understand each other and the world we live in. Art encourages empathy and compassion while defining us as people and as a society.

Each Manitoban deserves access to art, be it as a student, an audience member, a gallery attendee, a reader, a community participant or a professional artist. Further, we deserve access to art that speaks to our diverse experiences as Manitobans.

The Manitoba Arts Council acknowledges that our agency and many of Manitoba's arts institutions were founded with a European concept of artistic excellence. Though this created much of the arts infrastructure we have in Manitoba today, it advantaged some and excluded others. Several of our practices continue to favour art that exists in this context and we recognize that this continues to perpetuate inequity.

For many years, our focus has been on supporting professional arts – art-making done by artists who view their work as a vocation, usually have specialized post-secondary training, and receive fees for their work. Often there are barriers to entry into the professional arts as defined above.

Most of the artists, projects, and organizations working in the professional arts in Manitoba are in our provincial capital. This practice of primarily supporting professional arts has limited access to the arts for some Manitobans.

The Manitoba Arts Council holds the view that art makes the world a better place. With this view, we recognize that we have a responsibility to consider the environmental impact of art making. The Climate Crisis is one of the defining issues of our time, and we all have a role to play in finding efficiencies to reduce the carbon footprint of the arts in Manitoba.

And then there's the COVID-19 pandemic, which has upended the arts and cultural sector. In a time of such uncertainty, we recognize the need to provide stability and leadership so artists, organizations, and communities have time to reset for a new tomorrow.

We know the arts – with the capacity to inspire, soothe, challenge, and bring us together – are now more important than ever. We also know that the time to uphold equity, community building, and environmental sustainability is now. This requires rethinking how we view, value, assess, and fund the arts in all its forms.



## VISION

A Manitoba where arts and culture is at the heart of community life.

## PURPOSE

The Manitoba Arts Council funds the creation and sharing of arts and culture for the benefit of all Manitobans.

## VALUES

### EQUITY

MAC strives for funding, programs, and policies that are equitable for all. We recognize that some groups face barriers and that achieving equity for these groups may require targeted measures.

### DIVERSITY

MAC embraces the differences of all Manitobans and seeks to have this diversity represented in the work we support.

### CREATIVITY

MAC values the original expression of ideas in our work and in the work we fund.

### COLLABORATION

MAC seeks to develop partnerships to make efficient use of our resources, achieve common goals, and maximize our impact. We value a collaborative approach in the work of MAC funding recipients.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

MAC actively listens to stakeholders and makes our decisions on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## EQUITY & DIVERSITY

The Manitoba Arts Council commits to the following actions to elevate groups that have been marginalized, to reflect the diversity of Manitoba's people, and to encourage an evolving arts ecosystem.

- Refine program assessment criteria that favour a Eurocentric concept of excellence to instead focus on impact.
- Remove barriers to programs by allowing artists to self-determine if they are eligible for individual programs.
- Consider gender diversity in everything MAC does.
- Build on MAC's commitment to reconciliation by strengthening the Indigenous 360 program and outreach to Indigenous peoples in Manitoba.
- Develop MAC's understanding of Manitoba's underserved communities to work towards programs that are equitable for all.
- Revise MAC's Support-Operate program so that program requirements, assessment criteria, and award amounts reflect MAC's priority areas.
- Revise MAC's Support-Operate program to include an "on-ramp" for project-funded organizations that are aligned with MAC's priority areas. Also, include an "off-ramp" for current Support-Operate recipients that are not aligned with MAC's priority areas.

## ARTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The Manitoba Arts Council commits to the following actions to work towards a province where arts and culture is at the heart of community life.

- Ensure that both community-engaged arts and professional arts are valued at MAC.
- Prioritize arts and cultural activity beyond the provincial capital to ensure citizens in every region of the province have access to arts and culture.
- Prioritize projects and organizations that acknowledge, understand, and build communities.
- Invest in the generations to come through MAC's Artists in Schools program while ensuring the program reaches students in every region of the province.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Manitoba Arts Council commits to the following actions to consider future generations by reducing the environmental impact of arts and culture in Manitoba.

- Provide education and tools for arts and cultural practitioners to track and reduce their environmental impact.
- Update guidelines and assessment criteria for Support-Operate grant recipients to ensure organizations are considering, tracking, and working to reduce the environmental impact of their activity.
- Audit and reduce the environmental impact of MAC's operations.