

Waterloo Region Arts Fund Agenda



Thursday, April 21, 2022, 4:00 pm
Meeting to be held electronically
150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, Ontario

Should you require an alternative format please contact the Regional Clerk at Tel.: 519-575-4400, TTY: 519-575-4605, or regionalclerk@regionofwaterloo.ca

Pages

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest under the "Municipal Conflict of Interest Act"**
3. **Closed Session**

Recommended Motion:

That a closed meeting of the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund be held on April 21, 2022 at approximately 4:00 p.m. electronically, in accordance with Section 239 of the "Municipal Act, 2001", for the purposes of considering the following subject matters:

1. The meeting is held for the purpose of educating or training the members. At the meeting, no member discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision-making of the council, local board or committee

4. **Motion to Reconvene into Open Session**

Recommended Motion:

That the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund reconvene into Open Session at __:__ p.m.

5. **New Business**

- 5.1. **Centering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion - Needs Assessment and Recommendations Report**

Report from Jennifer Chan, EDI Consultant

2

6. **Next Meetings**

- **Thursday, June 16, 2022, 1 p.m.** (Spring 2022 Grant Application Review)
- **Friday, June 17, 2022, 3:00 p.m.** (Supplemental Grant Application Review Meeting, if required)

7. **Adjourn**

Recommended Motion:

That the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund meeting of April 21, 2022 adjourn at __:__p.m.



Region of Waterloo Arts Fund

Centering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Needs Assessment and Recommendations Report

PRESENTED TO

Region of Waterloo Arts Fund
Board of Directors

PRESENTED BY

Jennifer Chan

APRIL 2022

Table of Contents

3	Appreciation for the Land	12	Now What?
4	Why this Report and Why Now?	14	Diversity of Board
6	How to Use this Report	24	Capacities of RWAf
7	What?	32	Being an Artist @ Large
8	Process Timeline	39	Artists within the Region
9	So What?	47	Next Steps
		48	A Note from the EDI Consultant

Appreciation for the Land

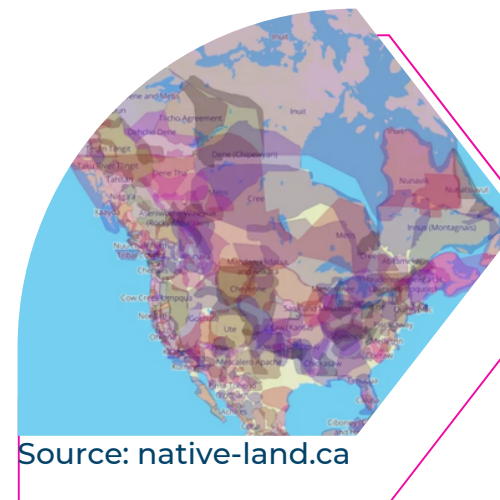
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"The Region of Waterloo Arts Fund is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land that was promised to Six Nations, and was traditionally used by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral Peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, create, and to meet on territory protected by the Dish With One Spoon wampum. The enduring presence, philosophies, and deep traditional knowledge of First Peoples are foundational to the arts and culture of this region. We are committed to supporting local creators by acknowledging the collective past, and respecting the contributions of all peoples."

(Source: Region of Waterloo Arts Fund)

"Change is possible.

There was a time when my grandmother wouldn't have thought land acknowledgements were possible."





The equity, diversity and inclusion process was conducted with the recognition that the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund will need to actively work to dismantle white supremacy and colonization to truly "make art happen" in the region in a way that is accessible to all residents.

Why this Report and Why Now?

In October 2021, the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund engaged Jennifer Chan to begin an equity, diversity, and inclusion process. This report is intended to be an artifact of the process and learning that took place throughout that journey and a document to support decision-making about potential next steps.


This report, "**Centering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Needs Assessment and Recommendations Report**" is written as a digestion of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant's perspectives and recommendations based on a series of interviews and equity, diversity and inclusion sessions, one internally with the RWAF Board and two with Artists within the region of Waterloo who identify as Indigenous, Black and People-of-Colour.

This report is a reflection of a moment in time when the self-identifying white Board Members recognized that the region of Waterloo is changing around them and that the board and the actions of RWAF are not enough.



This report captures existing gaps and opportunities within RWAF, many that are systemic and harder to move on today; but also many that are very tangible and actionable.

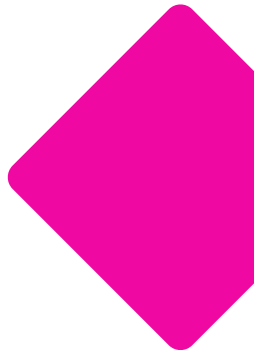
This report is the beginning of a much longer process of centering equity, diversity and inclusion within RWAF. Following this report, the current Board of RWAF will need to make some decisions on next steps in order to truly take action on any of these recommendations.



Finally, this report is written as an internal document of recommendations for the Board of RWAF, that being said, one of the first recommendations is for RWAF to develop transparent and accountable communication tools to share what was learned and next steps.

DISCLAIMER: The relationship between RWAF and Jennifer Chan started from a place of feedback and opportunity to do better. From this beginning, none of the work has been designed to centre white fragility or comfort and neither is this report.

There may be aspects of this report that trigger emotional reactions. Those emotional reactions are an invitation to investigate where those feelings are coming from and if they serve the individual's comfort or the collective goal of RWAF becoming a more equitable, diverse and inclusive funder.





How to Use this Report

As previously mentioned, this report is an artifact; there is not just one way to read this report. This report is intended to be a document that is revisited until it no longer serves its purpose.

Depending on who the reader is and their capacity to absorb this report, here are a few ways that might help with wayfinding:

If you are a reader who likes to get all the information, you might be nourished by reading this report from cover to cover.

If you are a reader who likes to jump to the actions, you might prefer to get right to the recommendations section called **Now What?** start on page 12.

If you are a reader who likes process, you might like to start with the process timeline in the **What?** section on page 7.

If you are a reader who likes to know what was shared, you might be curious to read the quotes in the **Now What?** section following the each recommendations on pages 16, 26, 34, and 41.

These are just a few ways of using this report, ultimately this report is a reference to provide a general direction, it is not intended to be a roadmap or a shortcut.

What?

This section of the report outlines what happened including a timeline of events and meetings.

This equity, diversity and inclusion process was designed to be a needs assessment to understand the existing status of thinking, action and possibilities within the current RWAF structures, Board and staff.

This process has revealed some well-meaning intentions with the lack of resources including capacity and capabilities to implement.

Based on the limited time and funding available and the expectation that this is the beginning of a much longer process, the equity, diversity and inclusion process for RWAF was designed to elevate and amplify as many Indigenous, Black and People-of-Colour's stories and living experiences as possible while simultaneously mapping out the boundaries and existing structures that RWAF operates within.



Process Timeline

OCT 2021 - APRIL 2022

-  **October 20, 2021**
first email exchange
-  **November 3, 2021**
first get-to-know-you meeting
-  **November 25, 2021**
observed Board Meeting
-  **December 14, 2021**
confirmed EDI process
-  **January 2022**
Letters to Future RAAF
-  **January - February 2022**
one-on-one interviews with
IBPOC Artists @ Large
-  **February 3, 2022**
Internal Stakeholders Meeting
-  **March 3 & 5, 2022**
External Stakeholder Meetings
-  **March 11, 2022**
check-in with EDI Committee
-  **April 2022**
EDI Recommendations Report

This process was designed to engage with individuals around their past, present and future experiences and perspectives around RAAF's ability to centre equity, diversity and inclusion in their work.

This process was largely reliant on individual commitments to participate truthfully and honestly.


So What?

This section of the report outlines the implications of what happened and why it is relevant to this process.

This process wouldn't have been possible without some trust and faith from the participants. This is significant considering how much discomfort has been caused in the last 2 years of nonprofit organizations realizing they need to do more and racialized individuals feeling exhausted from the expectation to take on anti-racism work without white people having to do the work themselves.


This process revealed that we are not only dealing with RWAF's future ability to do this work but also with past interactions and experiences that may be causing IBPOC Artists to have hesitation in the process and the organization to be able to do this work.

When negative or harmful experiences and interactions have occurred, it is important to acknowledge those wounds and address them within next steps. Those experiences might be on an individual basis or on a systemic basis.



While it is not RWAF's sole responsibility to dismantle all the systems of oppression in which it operates, there is certainly a lot that can be done to mitigate harm directly caused by Board Members and the funding process.

This work is possible and plausible. It requires action. It begins with acknowledging that once you know better, you need to do better.




While each interaction and conversation offered a variety of insights and complexity to this work, here is a brief summary of observations from each.

The **Letters to Future RWAF** highlighted that individuals generally think that RWAF is capable of ultimately committing to centering equity, diversity and inclusion however not with the all the existing Board Members and not without creating space and supports within the Board for racial diversity.




The **one-on-one interviews with IBPOC Artists @ Large** illustrated that the rare bit of racial diversity within decision-making roles within RWAF are limited in capacity and power and leave members feeling frustrated and disappointed.



The **Internal Stakeholder Meeting** demonstrated that Board Members have a broad range of understanding and experience when it comes to doing anti-racism and anti-oppression work. While some members are self-aware of their privilege, some are hesitant to acknowledge or address their privilege and this will be detrimental to safely bringing in IBPOC Board Members.

The **External Stakeholder Meetings** reinforced that IBPOC Artists are not a monolith and need different kinds of supports and actions from RWAF to see a shift from performative to reciprocity. The majority of IBPOC Artists who engaged offered several ideas for improving RWAF which demonstrates an opportunity for change.



These observations create the foundation for this recommendations report and to effectively implement these recommendations, it would be beneficially to design ways to intentionally bring these inputs forward rather than asking participants to rehash, unpack or relive these contributions.



Now What?

This section of the report outlines recommendations for taking action based on the conversations that took place during the EDI process.

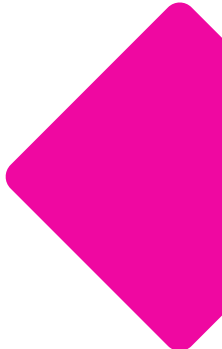

While some of the Board Members have expressed genuine desire to do this work, that alone is not going to be enough to make the desired impact.

The next steps of this work are reliant on funds to support the exploration and implementation of recommendations.

In a recent debrief meeting with the EDI Committee, it was shared that it seems promising to be able to secure more funding but the specifics have yet to be confirmed.

The recommendations shared here are a starting point, there are many more ways this work could be done as there is no right way to do this.

The priority is to keep going and focus on impact over intentions.



At this time, these recommendations do not include an implementation plan or strategy. Some recommendations will be easier to implement than others.

There are 24 recommendations in this report.

To support next steps, the recommendations are framed around the 4 key areas addressed early on in this process with quotes shared during the process:

- Diversity of Board
- Capacities of RWAf
- Being an Artist @ Large
- Artists within the Region

These recommendations are aimed at supporting RWAf to do the work of centering equity, diversity and inclusion.

“It was amazing to receive confirmation that all of the board members are white because I’ve had my suspicions. As an artist who creates music that is recognized as a black genre and appeals to a younger demographic I’ve often wondered if that played a role in how these “artists” viewed my craft. There needs to be more representation because it can be very frustrating and hurtful.”



Diversity of Board

◆ **Recruit and onboard a cohort of racialized board members with effective support from external EDI Consultant** to build better practices and structures for RWAF moving forward including compensation for specific EDI work, addressing macro- and micro-aggressions behaviour, governance policies and accountability measures for when conflict arises

◆ **Evaluate the effectiveness** of the existing governance structures of RWAF

◆ **Assess the logistics and responsibilities** required of Board Members, such as time of meetings, where they are held, the requirements of each Board Member to review each application, the time commitment to attend meetings as well as participate in committee meetings, board terms

◆ **Initiate anti-racism and anti-oppression training** for all Board Members and staff

◆ **Centre transparency and reciprocity** when building relationships and partnerships with community members and artists so that the Board Members and RWAF are not seen as an opaque and faceless entity

When approaching recommendations made for the Diversity of the Board section, it was taken into consideration the existing Board Members and the work needed to move the Board to being more diverse.

That work is not simply a numbers issue.

There are several considerations and actions needed, not all can be completed on the same timelines or with the same amount of effort.

“Are they willing to rework this system? So that actually fits the needs of board members who cannot afford that luxury of skipping a day of work?”

“Thank you for verifying that the board is all white. I had always suspected this, but wasn't completely sure. I appreciate the transparency.”

“It doesn't surprise me that the Board is entirely white. I am going to write to them and let them know I want to be on the Board.”

“I would have felt very uncomfortable if even one of the white Board members was here and would have likely said less than half of what to said today.”

“I'm worried that what is shared today won't actually happen. I really don't expect much to change at RAAF.”




“It has been the same people on the Board for years, we need more people who look like us to understand where we are coming from.”

“None of them understand the diversity of the community, I am the only Black person. How can they talk about diversity?”

“Start with hiring permanent BIPOC board members first!”

“It was amazing to receive confirmation that all of the board members are white because I’ve had my suspicions. As an artist who creates music that is recognized as a black genre and appeals to a younger demographic I’ve often wondered if that played a role in how these “artists” viewed my craft. There needs to be more representation because it can be very frustrating and hurtful.”

“I talked about my own method of noting any equity or diversity topics that are included in each application. And purposely bringing that up when reviewing the content with our board. But it's not lost on me that we are an all white board, and we must diversify to better represent the artists that apply for funding.”



“...people are more willing to create new structures and communities on who and what they care about than walk into a situation where they know, from previous experience, how much being a visible minority on an all-white board can ask from them in terms of emotional labour. I just haven't gotten the impression from previous conversations with the Board that there's an awareness of this ask on people's emotional labour when they talk about diversity and diversifying.”

“I wonder what Board diversity can look like when there's different expectations or roles people can choose within their membership - say a non-meeting attending board member who can volunteer to run the grant workshops and community engagement. ”

“To hang in while we work through this current process - to give myself permission to feel uncomfortable with not knowing where it's taking us - to be hopeful that the end result will create a more vital, more representative board.”

“I haven't recommended joining the board to friends who've asked for all of these stated reasons - ask on emotional labour, macro/microaggressions, and unpaid labour.”

"I'm so proud to be on this board and was excited to be part of it. Seeing all those white faces around the table is a bit embarrassing. Still, we're a group of well-meaning, art-loving individuals; willing to volunteer our time to do an interesting, vital job within the arts community."

"I agree that we need to better reflect our community within the board. I would be more than happy to give my seat to anyone who can meet the diversity required."

"I see moving out of my spot on the Board to make room for an IBPOC member."

"We should aspire to 6 out of 14 being IBPOC, with 3 of those being Indigenous. Maybe our most pressing work is to increase the diversity on our board - AND to consider how we might reconstruct our processes for applicants"

“The board is set-up to serve the needs of senior corporate/academic or retired membership. Meetings mid-day, mid-week stretching into school pick and dinner prep time preclude involvement of certain people. That said, it takes a significant amount of time and expertise to be an effective board member which often comes from the senior corporate/academic or retired community. Change makers spend their time making change not sitting on boards and young up-and-coming artists often have more pressing artistic or life priorities for a mid-week afternoon”

“I've mentioned this to the Board before when topics around board diversity have come up - I personally know a handful of fantastic artists in the community who care deeply about arts in the Region. However, they couldn't afford to be a volunteer board member. There's already an economic barrier built into how the board itself is structured.”

“Do we as a board need to undergo some kind of rigorous anti-racism training ourselves, to honestly engage with this process. And, what are the next steps?”

Executing new operational or granting strategies, especially IBPOC-focused grant programs; succeeding in finding, attracting and retaining a meaningful complement of IBPOC board members; and developing the onboarding and communication tools needed to bring all of this about feels pressing, overwhelming, and still a long ways off.”

“I would rather someone who really understands the culture when they read an application not just because they don’t want to be called racist.”

“Struck by the prominence of Indigenous concerns and needs. Not objecting, but curious how it intersects with what I know are large Arabic and Black communities here as well. I recognize the dangers inherent in ranking one group's needs against another.”

“I volunteered for this. So I actually reached out for this. And I don't know I'm sure if I was a person of color. And I reached out to the board to be on it that they would have said yes, after they looked at that person's artistic credentials, just like they looked at mine.”

“My imagined future for the RWAF is outside its current vision, mandate and operational capacities. The RWAF is doing what it is tasked to do. I am not sure there is a current desire for the Fund to do anything more than what it has been mandated to do and to perform those tasks to the best of its ability”



Capacities of RAAF

◆ **Partner with community-based organizations** to broaden outreach, recruitment and connection to groups currently disconnected from the work of RAAF

◆ **Diversify funding sources** to grow RAAF's funding pool and potential impact within the region for example applying to provincial and federal funding programs, engaging with corporate sponsors

◆ **Actively participate and stay updated** with anti-racism initiatives happening within the region including municipal council, school board, police, universities

◆ **Create specific funding streams** dedicated a particular cultural group or anti-racism initiative and hire a curator to oversee that process and decision-making process

◆ **Increase efforts on data collection** to participate in research, advocacy and evaluation of funding impact including but not limited to race-based data, demonstrated value to intersectional communities, increased employment for Artists and region

◆ **Improve on application criteria** and outcomes based on priorities such as emerging/established arts, fine/community-based arts, size of project organization/budget, impact measures

◆ **Continue working with EDI Consultant** to build on the momentum and trust established during the EDI process

When approaching recommendations for Capacities of RAAF section, it was taken into consideration the number of times that Board Members highlighted the challenges of their volunteer capacity.

That being said, these recommendations also acknowledge the responsibility and expectations placed on RAAF considering their access to money, influence on Council and position of power as a funding body.

These recommendations will likely require RAAF to rethink its existing governance structure and priorities.

“RWAF has occupied a lot of my time and thought over my two years as board president - essentially a volunteer part-time job. The amount of time required for the role is not trivial.”

“I envisioned the RWAF being a central resource for artists in the region, providing all kinds of services and resources, more like an Arts Council really.”

“We have a huge quantity of creative activity in the region, with a diversity of kinds of artists, and many small producing companies. Each one scrambles to keep itself afloat; I wish the RWAF could make that easier [in] some way. We want working artists to remain in the region!”

“I think that public and private funds for the arts are going to be tough to come by, but I'm hoping people see the benefit to everyone by funding the arts, not just the artists, but all of Waterloo Region.”



“I can envision a positive future for RWAF but I can also see it dying from irrelevancy, bureaucratic shift in priorities and budget cuts.”

“There is a need to understand why this is important to the community who is asking for the funds. It may not get to the same numbers as another project. We need to understand their values, their identity, their culture, their background that exists within these communities.”

“I am fearful of targeted budgeting - specific pots of money for different groups, regions, or causes. At the same time, I know our current “cookie jar” approach is limiting. I know there needs to be some creative thought given to how we structure our grant-giving.”

“We need to be able to balance the funds - not waiting until people make noise about it.”

“Engage with the organizations that support [the] immigrant population and train them for language skills and also support them to provide employment is one of them.”

“I have been pushing them on having these conversations and I am going to keep pushing them. The region is growing - seen as fastest growing in Ontario. We need them to see the arts as more than just a contribution to the region. But art can change the conversation in the region.”

“Supporting community centres, building programs to bring people closer, empower those that can support diverse communities with different languages.”

“Be open to acknowledge the gaps followed with smaller steps in implementation of ideas to bridge those gaps.”

“Educating the population about diversity and more anti-racism awareness. Talk to artists in Waterloo Region [to] learn about the challenges they are going through. Mass level data needs to be gathered.”

“I believe that keeping race-based data is a double-edged issue which could be helpful as well as hurtful. I feel as long as we're talking about it, at least we're keeping it on our radar.”

“I don't believe that our unconscious biases allows anyone to be "ethnic-blind". We can't very well ask applicants to identify the racial/ethnic backgrounds of everyone involved in their project - but....perhaps we could develop a statement of expectation along those lines to include on the application form or final funding letter.”

“...for the RAAF to partner with non-profits such as KWAG, CCGG, The Museum, etc. to provide free or affordable educational programs and art studio courses to ensure that disadvantaged immigrant constituents have support for their artistic activity and continued dialogue with the culture of their origin.”

“That we may need more volunteers and subcommittees to make changes/improvements.”

“We could announce a dedication of the upcoming round of grants exclusively to projects specifically targetting the rise in hate crimes and racism in our region. Some criteria would have to be formulated and publicized to ensure the projects were not just performative in nature. I can also imagine wanting to do some outreach to highlight what innovative might look like for such projects, or anyway to help applicants see their ways past creating something entirely didactic.”

“The way the AF is currently set up, their goals aren't about making art happen like their slogan implies, but more so about bottom lines and ticket sales.”

“The funds that RWAF offers aren't big enough to sustain a livelihood and usually goes to established artists or big organizations, it's unfair competition.”

“RWAF isn't prepared for big or radical shifts, but maybe small ones over time. There was a time when asking for Land Acknowledgements seemed impossible, now they don't seem like enough. Three generations ago, my grandmother wouldn't have believed it.”

“I don't see RWAF doing much to advocate for the growth of emerging artists in the region.”



“...am i picked because I identify as IBPOC”? That is a troubling statement.

We need to do a much better job of diversifying our Artist @ Large and board members so people don't feel [they're] a token addition.”





Being an Artist @ Large



Rename the Artist @ Large role



Shift majority of decision-making power into the hands of Artist @ Large role



Created paid tiers of participation and commitment within Artist @ Large roles



Facilitate value added benefits for Artist @ Large roles such as peer networking and professional development



Be clear and transparent about the role and responsibilities of Artist @ Large



Create flexible terms and commitments for Artist @ Large roles to create access to being a part of RWAF



Evaluate existing recruitment process and network for Artist @ Large role

When approaching recommendations for the Being an Artist @ Large section, it was taken into consideration that the Artist @ Large position is one that offers a great deal of opportunity to RWAF to shift their governance practice as well as to build a wider representation within their decision-making process.

The Artist @ Large position as it stands has a bit more, but not nearly enough, racial diversity but without the same power or authority as Board Members.

“Being on a committee requires so much emotional labour, even if I were paid, I’m not sure if I would do it if I don’t see the value of being there.”

“To me, it underlines that I think we need to do a better job of onboarding, preparing Artists @ Large advisors for the tasks that they’re going to undertake.”


“I was kind of interested in the artist at large, but there didn’t seem to be a lot of wiggle room to, to make it fit with, with what my needs would have been. And, and so I just didn’t respond, and I didn’t apply it. And and I bet a lot of people felt the same way.”

“Being able to volunteer flexible time for an organization like this is a privilege that many Indigenous and Equity Deserving communities unfortunately do not have the capacity to give, especially for initiatives that require them to help fix systemic inequities within the organization. If part of your ask is to have board members from Indigenous and Equity Deserving communities come and help Arts Fund become more Diverse, Inclusive and Equitable – they should be getting paid for those efforts.”

“I am just a volunteer, so I am not going to go out of my way to make changes”

"I am the only Black person here, you need to listen to me. I was pushing for specific grants to be funded. And it felt like the Board didn't like that I was 'aggressive'."

"I have immediately terminated my role as Artist-at-Large Advisor in my discipline/category. My only relationship with RWAF is to be a future grant fund recipient."



“I know we need to do much better in preparing and onboarding A@Ls. We could consider being more like gatekeepers and less like decision-makers ourselves - a shift in how we operate, giving the A@Ls more agency and autonomy.”

“This group of quotes makes me understand that we need to do a better job of introducing the A@L to the process and following up with them for feedback on their experience after the fact.”

“The implication in all of these quotes is that regardless of an AOL's level of involvement in the community (they are chosen on the basis of their "visibility" and activity within the department), these folks still don't seem to fully understand the "what" and "why" of the RWAF. We need to reach out to the practitioners, the potential recipients of the RWAF to inform, knowing we have limited budget and resources for such an initiative.”

"I'm grateful for the funding I got this year. But I also feel like I could have proposed anything as long as I said it was Black art and wrote it with a Eurocentric lens.

I know how to play the system. I know how to put together a proposal that sells. But so many don't and that's not fair."



Artists Within the Region

◆ **Improve application process** to offer a variety of ways to submit and an clear feedback process

◆ **Offer capacity building workshops** that are reflective and responsive to the needs of different community groups, including different languages, cultural backgrounds, virtual and in-person

◆ **Collect intersectional data** during application process and be responsive to what the data shows

◆ **Create paid mentoring opportunities** for Artists who have been successful with applications for communities how have been historically left out of the RWAF funding pool

◆ **Offer support** for RWAF fundees who are no longer able to safely do their proposed project

When approaching recommendations for the Artists Within the Region, it was taken into consideration that without Artists, the RWAF would cease to exist and therefore this entire process should centre around the Artists' needs first.

These recommendations require a great deal of investment of time and effort from both RWAF and IBPOC Artists in order to fully succeed.

“Most of the communities have a rich background in the region. Most white people think their roots are Blues, which originated from the Black culture.”

“I wish RWAF would/could put less emphasis on the quality of the budget portion of the proposal. I would like to spend more time funding "good" art and less time supporting well written proposals”

“Supporting more community and social justice art.”

“one thing that personally frustrates me is sometimes they do collect race based data, but they'll purposely not also collect data off of religion. And for people who are visibly part of religious minorities, that is also another form of exclusion, and the amount of places where they don't collect that because and I've heard it from a couple places.”

◆ "Race-base[d] data is needed asap, and critical to the successful long-term implementation of the program."

▶ "To truly 'make art happen', AF needs to support diverse artists to stay here."

"I'm moving out of the Region because as an emerging artist I am not growing, there isn't enough opportunities, and the people I want to work with and collaborate with are in Toronto. KW has always been, to me, a space for people in their 40s/50s who tend to also teach at the universities to create safe art for safe consumption by a rather conservative Council/public."

I will feel more comfortable engaging with RAAF when the next steps of the EDI process are clear. Right now, it feels performative."

“I will never apply for the fund again, my project and work changed and I was told I would either have to give back the funds or figure out how to do the work. I didn't feel supported and actually receiving the funds was harmful.”

“The best artists will always leave the Region. We currently can't compete with the big urban centres for funding and resources. One thing the Region could do is provide affordable, subsidized, stable (protected!) working space for artists working in different media (not just painting studios). I realize some of this has been initiated by groups like KWARTS Lab and Art\$Pay. But more needs to be done in this respect if we expect to keep our brightest stars.”

“It's tiring being in these committees, it is time away from our actual communities.

I have no expectation that RWAF will make big changes if they don't have to.”

“There is reverse immigration happening in the country. It's no longer better to live here with constant microaggressions than to live at home at-risk of terrorism.

I'm already on other committees, so that I can try to make a difference for my community. I can't be on all the committees.”


“The neighbourhood I live in is very diverse, and yet the local neighborhood magazine that comes every month always has a picture of a white couple on the cover. There are no white couples that live here.”

“Even with \$150 honorarium, I wasn't sure that I wanted to share my ideas because if nothing happens with these ideas, it feels like a waste of my time and yours.”

“Even in our own communities, not everyone agrees on what we want. There are so many cliques within cliques.”

“There aren't as many cultural enclaves in the region, so it is hard for newcomers and immigrants to find cultural community support and then they want to leave the region.”

“It feels like if my art is for just my community that the Arts Fund won't accept that because they want art that makes White people feel comfortable.”



**“If the Arts Fund
doesn't change, I have
no reason to go to
them for funding
because I know that
the way I do art doesn't
align with what they
want. They want
performance or fine
arts, my art is
community-based.”**



Next Steps

At this moment, the equity, diversity and inclusion process has opened a conversation that is unfinished and long overdue.

To truly do this work, it is a commitment that will outlast the individuals on the Board now, however that does not relinquish any of the existing Board Members from examining the ways they can contribute now with the power and privilege they do have to make the next steps of centering equity, diversity and inclusion be sustainable.

The process will be uncomfortable as it is a process of growth and learning, but if we are to truly leave behind an equitable futures for the next generations, we have a lot of work to do and that starts now.



A Note from the EDI Consultant

Hi, this is Jenn. I am the EDI Consultant who decided to take on this work.

Here is a bit about me:



I am a Mama of 2 kiddos. I was born, raised and still living in Tkaranto (or Toronto as you might colonially know it). I identify as Chinese-Canadian. I am a partner, a sister, a friend, a mostly disappointing daughter. I am a recovering perfectionist and fixer, thanks to being a Double Virgo. I have pandemic-induced anxiety and have found solace from my overthinking mind during the pandemic through floating in water and doing crafts from my childhood - currently obsessed with polymer clay. I am also a designer, a facilitator, a researcher and the CEO of the Department of Imaginary Affairs.

And if you are looking for more academic and work-based info:

I hold a Bachelors of Architectural Science and a Masters of Design, in Strategic Foresight and Innovation. I have been working within the nonprofit sector for the majority of my professional career. I continue to centre learnings from anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks into my design, facilitation and research practice. I primarily work to support nonprofits and players in the social innovation sector. I have worked on projects ranging from philanthropy, community development, housing, placemaking, settlement, program and service design, governance, public policy; just to name a few. In all my work, I see my role as using design, facilitation and research to centre, elevate and amplify the voices who are underestimated within the process.

Why am I sharing all of this:


Prior to taking on this contract, I had never formally considered myself an EDI Consultant. While I have been doing anti-racism and anti-oppression work for over 15 years, I also used to think that everyone else within the nonprofit sector did too.




In 2020, when many nonprofit organizations jumped into action to as a response to anti-Black racism and reconciliation, I took the time to reflect on my role within this work outside of just my own organization.

I have been supporting nonprofit organizations throughout my career, but typically in the work of program and service delivery, not specifically on their EDI work.

Ultimately, I am sharing this because I think it is important to see the people in the work. I am human, I have my own stories, living experiences, perspectives and biases. I bring those with me into the work I do. EDI work is deeply personal and individual as well as collective. I believe it is not possible to do this work without truly reciprocal relationships that are built on trust and connection.



I choose to do this work because I am tired of good intentions and am craving impact and actions. I choose to do this work because I cannot imagine my children growing up to continue to live in the world we live in today. I choose to do this work as a commitment to them and to the future generations of Turtle Island.



"Like, all systems, systems of oppression, inequality and inequity are by designed. Therefore, they may be redesigned."

Antoinette
Carroll