

## Indigenous/Métis Program Review

Summary Statement  
prepared by Saskatchewan Arts Board

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### Background

The Saskatchewan Arts Board began planning for a review of our Indigenous/Métis Program in January 2017. The Indigenous Pathways Program currently supports Indigenous/Métis artists and knowledge keepers practicing their art and teachings.

It has been nearly 20 years since the introduction of Indigenous programming at the Saskatchewan Arts Board. In 1999, an Indigenous Arts Advisory Panel was assembled to advise the Saskatchewan Arts Board regarding support for Indigenous artists. Nine Indigenous artists submitted a report with 61 recommendations, including:

- Creation of an Indigenous program consultant position
- Board appointments
- Formation of a standing IAAC (Indigenous Arts Advisory Council)
- Grant programming supporting Indigenous arts
- Participation in peer adjudication
- Artist-in-Residence programs

Since its inception in 1999, the Indigenous program has not been reviewed, and much has changed as Indigenous artists continue to create in diverse and dynamic ways. We felt that we needed to be sure that our programming reflects these changes.

In 2005, as part of the province's centennial celebrations, the *Clearing a Path* exhibition, a collaboration between First Nations University, Wanuskewin, Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, toured the province. In 2010, the *Cherished Things* exhibition showcased the work of Indigenous artists on the national stage, debuting at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre. Indigenous Traditional Arts Grants and Indigenous Contemporary Arts Grants were combined in 2011 to become the Indigenous Pathways Initiative program.

The Indigenous Pathways program was originally intended as a "path" for Indigenous artists towards "mainstream" programs. The Indigenous Pathways Initiative program supports individual artists and community projects (including knowledge keepers and elders). Artists in Schools provides support for residencies and projects related to educational curriculum. Funding ultimately comes from the public, and so funders are responsible to everyone, working in partnership with artists to fulfill the mandate to provide service to the greater public. In the current economic climate, we are always being asked to do more with less, so the challenge becomes, how do we make programs most effective? We are seeking to improve the programs we offer.

Going into the review process, we had a number of concerns that needed to be explored.

- Arts funding agencies, which have researched and developed extensive literature reviews, confirm that Indigenous knowledge and world view must be embedded in this type of programming.
- We need to move away from Eurocentric terminology such as traditional, contemporary, fine, formal, professional, established, success, disciplines, and accomplishments, and to recognize that many arts forms are not meant to be marketed and that should not, therefore, be the main assessment criterion (i.e. less emphasis on audience, popularity, gallery installations for certain art forms).
- There is no one way in which Indigenous artists practice traditions. It was important, therefore, that our review engage artists in discussion as to what Indigenous art is and who Indigenous artists are. We needed to draw out respectful consensus toward protocols and historical recognition.
- Relationships are everything in Indigenous communities, including art making. Family/kinship ties are essential to existence.
- While the program was originally meant to be a “pathway into the mainstream” it now appears that there is a need for a stronger expansion of Indigenous programming. History and differences in world view make it clear that Indigenous people understand and create, develop and present art differently than other parts of Canadian society.

By reviewing other organizations’ reports and academic research regarding art, it was affirmed that the Saskatchewan Arts Board programming needs to be tailored to fit the needs of Indigenous artists as a growing and unique population that, while contemporary, is very much in tune with its indigeneity, and that this connection shows throughout the work.

In summary, our review of Indigenous programming needed to engage the Indigenous/Métis program artists in the community, gathering and learning the ways in which they feel their art and work can be accommodated through our granting programs in better and more consistent ways.

### **Draft Program Objectives**

As part of our review process, we drafted the following outcomes for SAB’s Indigenous/Métis grant program.

The Indigenous/Métis Art and Artists Program supports the development and continuation of Indigenous/Métis art forms in the province of Saskatchewan by:

- providing opportunities for Indigenous/Métis artists to create and share their art;
- being accessible to all Indigenous/Métis people throughout the Treaty territories in the province;
- acknowledging that Indigenous/Métis art forms can encompass all practices;
- acknowledging diverse Indigenous/Métis world views as essential and influential in all Indigenous/Métis art forms and making it possible for Indigenous/Métis artists to maintain their world view and practice;
- ensuring that all peoples of Saskatchewan have opportunities to engage with the art forms that derive from Indigenous/Métis world views, practices, and protocols; and
- contributing to the realization of the mandate and strategic priorities of the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

## **Review Process**

### First Stage: One-Day Indigenous/Métis Gathering – January 26<sup>th</sup> 2017

Our first step was to determine what the objectives of the program should be. We realized that we needed to start within the community of well-known, established Indigenous/Métis artists, so we held a one-day gathering at Wanuskewin just outside of Saskatoon. This gathering was well received and useful knowledge was garnered from the group. We framed the day in small and larger group discussions in an attempt to address the following questions.

1. How do we create and share Indigenous/Métis art? List some tangible and intangible ways. Who are our audiences?
2. How do we incorporate world view into our practice? What is important to us as Indigenous/Métis artists? What are some examples?
3. As Indigenous/Métis artists/knowledge keepers, how do we ensure that our knowledge and practice is sustained and maintained? How are we accountable to our Indigenous people?
4. When we think of Indigenous/Métis art and artists, do we feel anything is missing or lacking? If so, what?
5. How do we strengthen our artists/communities?

### Second Stage: Unstructured Interviews

Our next stage in the review process was to interview another 15 artists that were recommended by the participants at this initial gathering. We asked these people the following questions.

1. What are some ways that you share art?
2. How can the SAB program better support artists?
3. What focus do you think is important for arts funders? Is anything missing?
4. What can we do better for Indigenous/Métis artists?

## Themes

Significant themes were gathered throughout the initial day in both small and large group discussions, and these themes were repeated in the one-on-one interviews. All of the discussions were full of many important ideas and suggestions, and it was a challenge to summarize so much useful knowledge. Key themes raised were as follows.

- Mentorships in various forms – youth/Elder, keepers, ways to transfer knowledge
- Accessibility – childcare considerations; poverty; lack of resources (including places to show work); challenges in application processes with western understanding or bureaucracy, training, education
- World View – acknowledging spirituality/familial ties, protocols, purpose and intention within arts practice and the application processes
  - Four essential components (spiritual/physical/mental/emotional) are the main drivers of Indigenous/Métis art – healing and culture

- Traditional/contemporary division creates restrictions that are problematic as there are so many ways of knowing and doing within the Indigenous/Métis communities within Saskatchewan and beyond
- Ideas of intent and purpose of art may differ from western concepts of audience and success
- Much art is based on social issues, healing, and cultural awareness/knowledge
- Grant Writing – more outreach and workshops need to be made available to artists; grant application forms are confusing/bureaucratic
- Technology – although active on social media, some artists may have restricted access to technology; need for more grant writing/promo/showcase opportunities online
- Language-based arts need to be acknowledged in funding program
- Cultural Appropriation
  - Program and indigeneity – Who has access? Those that do Indigenous art or those that are Indigenous/Métis artists?

### Third Stage: One-Day Indigenous/Métis Gathering – May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Based on the results of the first two stages, SAB hosted another gathering with a different group of artists. This group was tasked to review and give comments and suggestions to the draft objectives and issues and proposed responses. We asked the following questions.

- What are your reactions to the draft outcomes? Do they reflect worldview?
- Are there any other issues that have not been addressed in this document?
- Do our proposed solutions address the issues?

The responses from that gathering were recorded and used to revise this report.

Over the next few weeks, SAB will be revising the application materials for the Indigenous/Métis Art and Artists program. We are making this report public to allow the general public to respond, should they wish, while that work is underway.

### **What's Next?**

Several issues have come up repeatedly in our review. This document – which reflects the results of a five-month process – details the concerns that were raised and ways that the Arts Board is proposing to address the issues. We have revised this document based the responses of the artists at our recent gathering. Here is what we have heard:

We are proposing the following responses, dividing our actions into four categories.

- immediate – change to be implemented by the fall 2017 application deadline
- mid-term – action to be considered as SAB moves to new application processes in 2018/19
- under consideration – SAB staff will consider implications of this change and may move in this direction over the long term
- communications – SAB staff needs to build new mechanisms to clarify existing policies around this issue

Responses placed in the “communications” category are often actions that SAB is already undertaking but about which the review participants were unclear.

### General Principles and Funding Levels

*Issue: There is a demand for more money in this program, both to support more Indigenous/Métis work and artists and to provide more substantial grants.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Acknowledge that all SAB programs are all underfunded but that, at least for the foreseeable future, the Arts Board is unlikely to receive additional funding. (communications)
- Despite the current climate of economic restraint, commit to maintaining the current allocation while continuing to advocate for new money. (immediate and ongoing)

*Issue: Concerns were raised about “living allowance” levels, particularly in relation to artists in single-parent, low-income households with little access to other forms of supports. Given the current financial constraints on the program, however, increasing living allowance rates would significantly impact the number of projects that could be supported.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Allow applicants to request full living allowance without pro-rating the amount to reflect less than full-time work on a project. Instead, require a declaration that the artist intends to devote significant time to the project by reducing their other commitments, which could include using living allowance toward childcare. (immediate)
- Include a statement in the application form that encourages childcare as a part of the living expenses. (immediate)
- Commit to revisiting the subsistence level when additional funding becomes available for this program. (under consideration)

*Issue: Whether people are on social assistance, disability or pension, taxation issues are problematic, many people are not aware of possible repercussions; there have been examples where grant funding has affected Elders’ pensions.*

#### Proposed Responses

- The Arts Board cannot offer taxation advice. We can, however, make a clearer statement on the application form to remind applicants of the possible implications of receiving this funding and provide a hyperlink to related information on the Canada Revenue Agency website; this wording should be included with the budget template in the living allowances section. (immediate)

*Issue: Cultural appropriation is a serious issue in our society and in this program. There is not enough education and awareness of this issue in Saskatchewan.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Provide links to educational tools regarding cultural appropriation on the SAB website. (mid-term)

- Premise all programs at the SAB with a brief explanation of cultural appropriation. In all funding applications where traditional cultural materials are used, request a description of the protocol teachings in the application. For example, if an applicant plans to use a ceremonial song, ask them to provide information regarding who gave the permission for its use and how those permissions were received. (mid-term)

### Funding Programs

*Issue: The name, “Indigenous Pathways Initiative,” is problematic as it does not reflect current Indigenous/Métis artists’ experience and practice. While at one time the grant was meant to be temporary – a “pathway to the mainstream program” – it has been made clear that Indigenous/Métis artists work with different value systems and will always require a separate program. In fact, it was discussed that the program needs to be expanded to reflect the growing body of Indigenous artists and arts forms.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Change the program name to reflect the current experience and intentions of Indigenous/Métis artists. Include Métis in the name. We are proposing the name Indigenous/Métis Art and Artists program. (immediate)
- Work with artists and communities to establish a set of foundational values for the assessment process. (immediate)

*Issue: There are areas of Indigenous artistic practice that are not reflected well in the current program. We need to reflect the Indigenous emphasis on mentorship and passing on traditions. The program also needs a stronger focus on Indigenous languages; languages are imbedded within cultural understanding and what make Indigenous/Métis art forms different from the mainstream.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Highlight and encourage the mentorship aspect of the program. These mentorship opportunities could be formal or informal, simply someone with cultural knowledge and/or arts expertise to teach another, and would not be restricted to elders and youth. (immediate)
- Include the term “language learning” within the description on the first page of the application and encourage language keepers to apply. (immediate)

*Issue: There are a number of perceived barriers to the current program. The program is seen as inaccessible to those who have limited western education. It is also limited for those with Indigenous/Métis ancestry who are not connected to their culture and background but who choose to practice western art forms.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Strengthen eligibility requirements to allow access to anyone who is of Indigenous/Métis decent regardless of art form or connection to culture. (immediate)
- Continue outreach in the north, particularly through stronger communications and/or media attention. (mid-term)
- Develop a program, possibly in conjunction with recent reviews of the Independent Artists program, that would allow program consultant to be in residence for up to a week in smaller

communities. This would allow greater opportunities to meet with artists and to see work created in that region. (mid-term)

### Application Process

*Issue: Current application process is not user-friendly to those that are not educated in bureaucratic language and/or do not have access to technology.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Develop and distribute a supplementary guide to completing the grant application. (immediate)
- Revise the application package using clear language, including simpler questions like:
  - Who are you?
  - What do you want to do?
  - How will you go about it?Use terms which will be familiar to people in any artistic discipline, reducing the use of “grant-speak.” (immediate)
- Allow project descriptions as an oral statement on video or audio recording with a time limit. (mid-term)
- Conduct interviews with applicants. (under consideration)
- Describe and present an example of an artistic résumé, and allow for a less structured option which could still serve as an introduction to the artist, how they learned their craft, and where they have shared their work. (immediate)
- Do an overall update of the wording and technical needs in the support materials requirement to the application. (immediate)
- Provide new tools to assist applicants with grant applications, including ongoing grant-writing workshops (live and online) and booklet and video guides to assist first-time applicants. (immediate)

*Issue: Grant terms are limiting for Indigenous artists who focus on immediate as opposed to long-term planning. Common practice based on world view is to do things with less organizing and planning.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Consider developing a micro-grant program for short-term projects. These micro-grants would be for smaller request amounts and could be applied for at any time. (under consideration)
- Given that the amount of funds available for grant programs is not likely to increase in the immediate future, consider the importance of a micro-grant program if it would impact the amount of money allocated towards the primary Indigenous/Métis granting program. (under consideration)

*Issue: Currently, people who have been successful with applications to the Independent Artist program can not apply to Indigenous grant programs again. This is unfair to Indigenous artists, as the values and intent of their work are still Indigenous and some work may be assessed more adequately by a jury of Indigenous artists.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Lift this restriction as to allow Indigenous artists to always be eligible to the programs intended for them. Develop ways to ensure that an artist cannot apply to more than one program at a single deadline with the same project. (immediate)
- Consider creating an emerging artist section within the Indigenous/Métis Art and Artists program. (immediate)

*Issue: Juries are always a repetition of the same people and are not fair to most Indigenous/Métis artists.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Reconsider peer assessment based more strongly on values as opposed to project and activity merit. (immediate)
- Develop an FAQ about juries and jury processes to address questions such as how someone is asked to sit on a jury, if there is a list of potential jurors, how frequently a juror might be used, and training provided for potential jurors. (immediate)
- Expand the jury pool by inviting artists and community members to recommend potential jurors. (immediate)

*Issue: Requirements for the final report are difficult and may not reflect the amount of funding received. It may also be difficult to obtain receipts for certain practices, such as collecting natural materials or ceremonial inclusion as part of the artistic process.*

#### Proposed Responses

- Simplify final report forms. Look for ways in which record of the artistic work – photography, video, recording, writings – can substitute for text responses in a written report. (immediate)
- Rethink final report forms to reflect ways in which we can garner qualitative data that might more accurately reflect Indigenous ways of working. Consider using impact statements that describe social value of work as opposed to simply measuring audience numbers. (immediate)
- Find new ways to communicate the importance of final reports as ways for the Arts Board to justify and potentially to increase our public funding and to support additional work. (communications)
- Reconsider requirements for receipts for anything over \$100. As part of that consideration, recognize that not all exchanges are monetary, and consider allowing an activity log to track exchanges and interactions with the community in lieu of receipts. (mid-term)
- Change restrictions to allow tobacco and honouring gifts as eligible expenses. (immediate)