

# CONNECTED VOCAL STRONG

Kingston  
Arts Council  
**Strategic Plan  
2019-2023**



kingston  
arts  
council



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Background
- 4** Context
- 5** Highlights from Our Community Consultation
- 6** Mission & Vision
- 7** Who We Serve & Our Strategic Values
- 8** Strategic Priority: Connect and Build Community
- 9** Strategic Priority: Stand Up for the Arts
- 10** Strategic Priority: Grow Stronger for the Future
- 11** Core Activities

In 2016, the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) launched Building a Creative Community, a comprehensive and inspiring three-year strategic plan (2016-2018) that set out a new mission and vision for the organization, as well as four key priorities:

1. Rebrand and reposition the KAC
2. Support the community through communications, funding, networking and collaboration
3. Be a leading arts resource
4. Build organizational capacity

The plan clarified the KAC's role in the community and laid the foundation for our success and growth. We've come a long way over the past three years. Key achievements include:

- ▶ Replacing our membership model with a supporter model, opening our doors to the broader arts community;
- ▶ Increasing our accessibility by choosing physically accessible venues and offering ASL interpretation, childcare and travel support for the majority of our programs;
- ▶ Expanding our communications efforts by developing two e-newsletters (Arts in View and ArtsBuzz) as well as the YGK Arts Project, an initiative that celebrates local artists and arts workers;
- ▶ Building and strengthening our relationships with community and provincial partners including the City of Kingston, Kingston Economic Development Corporation, the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, WorkInCulture and Ontario Culture Days;
- ▶ Creating diverse professional development opportunities including our Platform workshop series, our KAC in Conversation thought leadership events and our well-received The Arts & Equity Project; and
- ▶ Growing our capacity to three full-time employees.

In 2019, the Kingston Arts Council began the process of developing a new strategic plan to build on the success of the initial plan and respond to current community needs. Consultation with the community began in May 2019 and informed the organization's work through the summer and fall to develop the priorities and objectives outlined in this plan.



# CONTEXT

The arts landscape in Kingston has changed in many significant ways since 2015. Provincial funding cuts have brought hardship for many artists, arts workers and arts organizations. Education sector funding has also been hit hard, with impacts including the cancellation of many school arts programs, decreasing vital arts opportunities for youth.

Kingston is also facing a housing crisis, with purchase and rental prices skyrocketing. Our vacancy rate sits at one of the lowest in the country<sup>1</sup> and, as of October 2019, Kingston ranks as Canada's 13th most expensive city for renters<sup>2</sup>. It has become increasingly difficult for artists and arts workers to live, create and build careers in Kingston, and arts organizations are challenged to retain qualified staff and build their capacity. Rehearsal, studio, exhibition and performance space is also at a premium.

It is not, however, all dire news. While several provincial arts funding sources have been cut, the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) has grown, reaching \$587K in 2019. Since its inception in 2007, CKAF has invested \$6.9M in our arts community. We look forward to continuing in our role as administrator of the Fund and advocating for its continued advancement.

Adversity has also brought our community together. In spite of an increasingly competitive environment, innovative partnerships and collaborations between artists, arts organizations and the wider community are flourishing. The enthusiastic and willing response to the Kingston Arts Council's The Arts & Equity Project – a programming series that brought our community together to discuss equity principles and their activation in Kingston arts – has also demonstrated a collective imperative to improve access to and engagement in the arts for everyone.

It is within the context of these challenges and opportunities that this plan's priorities have been developed.

1. Statistics Canada, Table 34-10-01:27-01, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb1/en/tv.action?pid=3410012701>

2. <https://blog.padmapper.com/2019/10/15/october-2019-canadian-rent-report/>

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In the spring of 2019, the Kingston Arts Council reached out to the arts community with a survey designed to gather insights into the challenges, opportunities and issues that artists, arts workers, collectives and arts organizations are facing at this time. We also invited feedback on KAC programs and services as well as indications of interest in potential new and expanded programs.

The feedback from the community was extensive: 143 responses were received with more than 14,000 words of commentary. Survey responses affirmed the general direction and priorities pursued by the KAC over the past three years and identified a wide range of issues summed up under these main themes:

- ▶ **FINANCIAL:** One of the most frequent challenges mentioned involved **financial support for artists and arts organizations**. Assistance is needed to secure grants, pursue fundraising campaigns, connect with donors, find funding for events and enhance the climate for professional rates of pay.
- ▶ **SPACE:** Almost as frequently mentioned were challenges with **finding professional, public and affordable space** for exhibition, performance, rehearsal and art creation (e.g. studio space).
- ▶ **NETWORKS:** Many respondents spoke to the value of **connecting with mentors, collaborators and other peers**, and initiatives that bring people together to connect with each other and with organizations. The idea that “we are better together” extended to diverse and marginalized groups and being inclusive and accessible.
- ▶ **MARKETING:** Many in the arts community are focused on **reaching new audiences and customers**, and called for support with audience development and participation, marketing, sales opportunities and communications.

Responses also covered a wide range of other specific issues and ideas, from board governance and volunteer recruitment to advocacy and regional inclusion.

# MISSION & VISION

Feedback from the community, staff and board indicated that the organization's mission as created in 2015 is still relevant and aligned with the Kingston Arts Council's role within Kingston's arts sector today. Only minor refinements were completed. It was felt, however, that the organization's vision statement was not suitably aspirational and, in fact, spoke more to the organization's current role rather than where we are striving to be. A new vision statement has been articulated.

## **MISSION**

The Kingston Arts Council (KAC) provides strategic leadership and services for the arts — as funder, leader, advocate, resource and facilitator of opportunities — in Kingston and the surrounding area.

## **VISION**

We envision a Kingston where:

- ▶ the arts are understood to be essential to our community's health and vitality;
- ▶ people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities experience, value and see themselves reflected in the arts;
- ▶ all those who wish to participate in the arts have the resources and opportunities to do so;
- ▶ artists and arts workers are able to build sustainable careers; and
- ▶ our arts sector, artists, arts workers and arts organizations are thriving and recognized locally and nationally for their efforts, talents and innovation.

# WHO WE SERVE & OUR STRATEGIC VALUES

Staff and board also took time to consider the KAC's constituency, which resulted in the development of a statement outlining who we serve. The process of examining the KAC's role in the community and how we can best serve Kingston's arts sector also helped to define the organization's strategic values.

## WHO WE SERVE

The Kingston Arts Council serves artists, arts workers and arts organizations in Kingston and the surrounding area. We serve all disciplines and arts practices, including arts education and community-engaged arts, as well as all levels of participation, including amateur, emerging professional and professional. We support all those in the arts who are striving to grow and to contribute to a thriving creative community.

## STRATEGIC VALUES

Many values make up the organizational culture of the Kingston Arts Council, but the core values that embody our deepest commitments include:

- ▶ Serving the **full spectrum of arts practice** in a balanced way;
- ▶ Embracing **diversity, equity and inclusion** as an organization and enriching the community's understanding of equity principles;
- ▶ Ensuring **organizational stability & sustainability**; and
- ▶ Acting from a place of **openness, transparency and accountability** in all we do.



## CONNECT AND BUILD COMMUNITY

### PRIORITY

Strengthen the local arts community through equity activation and community outreach, communications and increased opportunities for collaboration.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Become a model and advocate for the adoption of **diversity, equity and inclusion** practices within the arts community. Strengthen connections with underserved artistic communities — with emphasis on engaging Indigenous, ethno-cultural and disability arts communities— to better understand their needs and provide improved opportunities, tools and programming.
- ▶ Explore how the KAC may expand its role as a **communications hub** for the arts community. Become known as the go-to resource for information about arts events and programs.
- ▶ Create **opportunities for the arts community to come together** to share knowledge and resources, participate in collaborative problem solving, establish partnerships and build support networks. Develop mentorship opportunities for artists and arts workers.



# STAND UP FOR THE ARTS

## PRIORITY

Be a leading arts resource and advocate, responding to key arts and community issues. Advance the arts community's expertise and stability to help sustain a thriving arts workforce.

## OBJECTIVES

- ▶ **Catalyze professionalism in the arts** by providing high-quality professional development opportunities and promoting adherence to industry rates and standards for the engagement of artists and arts workers.
- ▶ **Help grow audiences and revenues.** Advance opportunities for artists, arts groups and arts organizations to develop their audiences and grow their revenue through grants, fundraising, sponsorships, patrons and other forms of financial support.
- ▶ Take the lead as a vocal and well-informed **advocate for the arts community** on both emerging and long-standing issues — including the need for more space for artists and arts workers to live, work and create – and support the community in activating their own advocacy initiatives and networks.



## GROW STRONGER FOR THE FUTURE

### PRIORITY

Build the Kingston Arts Council's organizational capacity and ability to align with current trends and best practices.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Explore **new ways of delivering services** including the use of digital technologies and approaches (e.g. live-streaming programs and events, developing online learning modules). Research and develop innovative operational practices.
- ▶ **Enhance KAC's stability** and resources in terms of staffing, revenue streams and partnerships. Manage expectations for the range and level of services provided.
- ▶ **Support KAC board members, volunteers and staff** through increased opportunities for training, improved structures and refreshed organizational policies and practices so they can perform their duties at a high level.

The priorities identified in this strategic plan speak to areas where special attention, resources, change and effort are needed over the next four years. These priorities support the continuation of several of the KAC's core activities:

## THE CITY OF KINGSTON ARTS FUND

Each year the KAC administers more than \$500,000 in municipal arts funding. These grants are provided to local arts organizations and collectives to foster creativity at all levels and enrich how Kingston residents experience and engage with the arts. They also build the capacity of the arts community, enhance Kingston's cultural economy and promote the stability and sustainability of the sector.

## THE ARTS & EQUITY PROJECT

The KAC has recently embarked on an effort to advance the arts community's understanding and activation of equity principles within their work. Phase 1 of this project was well received and the community has called for a continuation of this activity and support.

## MAYOR'S ARTS AWARDS AND CULTURE DAYS

In partnership with the City of Kingston, the KAC will continue to build on the Mayor's Arts Awards recognition program, launched in 2017, to celebrate extraordinary contributions to the arts. We will also continue to support the annual Culture Days weekend - a national event that celebrates our cultural community and aims to increase participation in the arts and culture - in partnership with the City of Kingston and Ontario Culture Days.

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The ongoing work of the KAC will continue to include facilitating discourse on topics of interest and relevance to the arts community and maintaining connections to other arts service organizations, arts councils and the municipality. We will also continue to proactively research and share new trends, models and developments in the arts.

## KINGSTON ARTS COUNCIL STAFF

### **Kirsi Hunnako**

Executive Director

### **Laura Chaignon**

Programming and Communications  
Coordinator

### **Felix Lee**

Grants Coordinator

## KINGSTON ARTS COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Billyann Balay**, Chair

**Will Britton**, Treasurer

**Megan Sirett**, Secretary

**Barb Danielewski**

**Stephen Elliott**

**Elizabeth Hesp**

**Mariah Horner**

Our thanks to former Programming and Communications Coordinator Diana Gore, former Board member Hollie Stewart and consultant Rob Wood at 8020 Info Inc. for their participation in and support of our strategic planning process.

The Kingston Arts Council acknowledges with gratitude operating funding received from the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Kingston.

Designed by Vincent Perez of Everlovin' Press

Printed by Gilmore Reproductions



## Kingston Arts Council

370 King Street W. Unit 115

Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning

Kingston, ON K7L 2X4

613-546-2787

artskingston.ca



kingston  
arts  
council