

# ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



# WELCOME TO OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

“



The year 2024 continued to mark a shift with Ontario arts communities, and I am proud to share what has been accomplished here at OAC, but more importantly what our 3,000+ grants bring to Ontarians.

This year has highlighted the incredible resilience and creativity of our arts community. Artists and arts organizations across Ontario have navigated unique challenges, demonstrating the adaptability and strength that make the arts such an invaluable part of our society.

We've been able to sustain our mission and explore new avenues to share and celebrate the arts. We look forward to continuing our work together to build a vibrant, sustainable future for the sector and to support the boundless potential of our artistic community.

”

**Michael Murray, CEO**

“

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the dedication and spirit of Ontario's artists and arts organizations. I can only match your energy as you face and adeptly navigate a changing landscape, reinforcing the importance of working collaboratively, innovating and supporting one another.

Thanks to the collective efforts of our community, supporters and funders, we are ready to embrace the new year with optimism and renewed commitment. Together, we are building a brighter future for the arts in Ontario, and we are excited to continue this journey with all of you.



”

**Simon Foster, Chair, Board of Directors**

## ABOUT US

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) is our province's primary funding body for the arts. Since 1963, we've helped artists and arts organizations to realize their creative visions, build careers and audiences, and bring arts activity to communities of all sizes across Ontario.

The arts are essential to the health and prosperity of our communities, and the impact of the arts is profound, touching every corner of our lives. The arts inspire us, challenge us, and connect us in ways that are both deeply personal and remarkably universal. Not to mention, arts activities can be engaging, entertaining – and just plain fun!

The government's long-term investment through OAC has had an invaluable impact on Ontario – fostering economic opportunities, social connection, mental health, community well-being and cultural tourism across the province. By investing in the arts, we are also investing in the continued vitality and well-being of our communities.

OAC's role goes beyond being Ontario's primary funding body for the arts by:

- offering granting programs that support professional artists and arts organizations across Ontario with grants awarded through rigorous, transparent peer assessment processes;
- providing advisory services that offer resources to help artists develop their careers;
- showcasing the value and impact of the arts to policymakers and the public; and
- conducting research studies on the impact and needs of the arts sector.



# OAC FUNDING BY THE NUMBERS

Figures reflect 2023-24 grant applicant data.

**3,192 grants awarded**

for a total value of

**\$53.3 million**



**11,215**

Total number of grant applications submitted



**2,149 grants to individual artists**

for a total value of

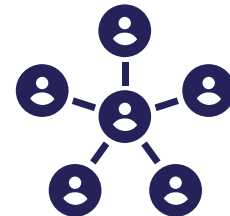
**\$10.6 million**



**1,043 grants to organizations**

for a total value of

**\$42.6 million**



**100 %**

Total number of Ontario's 124 ridings where artists and arts organizations received OAC grants



**219**

Total number of Ontario communities where resident artists and arts organizations received grants



**\$981.6 million**

Total local spend across the province by 563 operating organizations (total expenditure projection)

**\$3.41 per Ontarian<sup>1</sup>**

Total public support to the arts through OAC

<sup>1</sup>Based on Ontario population of 15,608,369 as of July 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex).

# ARTS BY THE NUMBERS

**27.1 million<sup>1</sup>**

Total number of people engaged in OAC-funded activities



**1,032,800 hours<sup>1</sup>**

Total estimated number of hours worked by volunteers at OAC-funded organizations



**299**

Total number of peer assessors on OAC assessment panels



**21.1 million<sup>1</sup>**

Total attendance at 563 operating organizations



**3.7 million<sup>1</sup>**

Total number of participants at OAC-funded arts education activities



## ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISM

**Arts and culture tourists are more likely to be from overseas**

Nearly 1 in 3 international visitors to Ontario participated in arts and culture tourism



**3x the impact**

The average arts and culture trip has nearly triple the economic impact of non-arts and culture trips

**\$11.4 billion**

Spending on arts and culture tourism in Ontario, resulting in

**\$5.7 billion**

in direct value-added to the province

<sup>1</sup>Based off of 2023-24 grant applicant data, most recent available attendance figures from 2021-22. Ontario Arts Council and Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada (CADAC), 2024.

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL 2024

# FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL ONTARIANS

It was a privilege to see our funding in action. This year, OAC funding reached 219 communities in every corner of Ontario.



From top left: Great Canadian Theatre Company (Ottawa), Mosaic Press (Oakville), Weengushk Film Institute (M'Chigeeng), Sampradaya Dance Creations (Mississauga), Tom Thomson Art Gallery (Owen Sound), Jorge Thielen Armand (London), Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario (Sudbury), H'art Centre (Kingston), Arushi Chopra (Newmarket), Art Gallery of Hamilton (Hamilton).

# OAC SUPPORTS ... CREATING AND PRESENTING



“

Thanks to OAC funding, we're able to bring world-class music and arts experiences to our community year after year. Their commitment to the arts ensures that events like ours can thrive and continue to inspire, entertain, and connect people through the power of music.

”

**Stratford Summer Music**

“

Thanks to the support of OAC I've been working on a new creative dance piece ... blending traditional Korean dance and music with underground club dance and music. It's been an exciting process and we're super thrilled with the final result. Big thanks!

”

**Miss Tangent**



“

OAC funding has an incredible impact of on our program and the lives of young musicians! Their generous support allows us to rehearse, offer mentorship, lessons, and host performances in concert halls across Ontario.

”

**National Youth Orchestra of Canada**

# OAC SUPPORTS ... BUILDING AUDIENCES AND MARKETS



“

A huge thank you to OAC for making [our Northern Ontario concerts] possible. It has been such a heartwarming experience seeing folks who wouldn't have had access to these shows otherwise be able to experience live music in beautiful outdoor spaces.

”

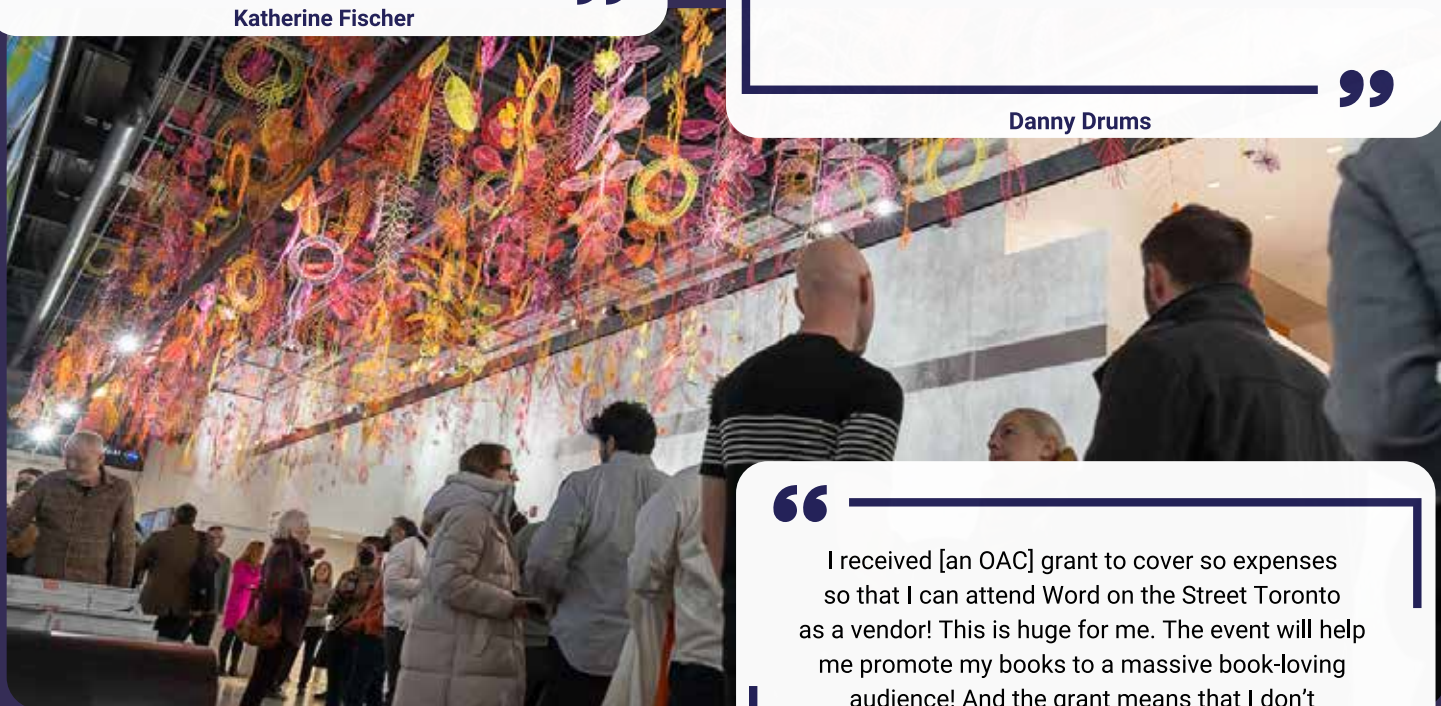
**Katherine Fischer**

“

The funding provided will ensure a strong relationship with international partners and open the door to future opportunities.

”

**Danny Drums**



“

I received [an OAC] grant to cover so expenses so that I can attend Word on the Street Toronto as a vendor! This is huge for me. The event will help me promote my books to a massive book-loving audience! And the grant means that I don't have to worry about the costs of participating.

”

**Erica of Open Sky Stories**



# OAC SUPPORTS ... ENGAGING COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS



“

Arts funding – a Return on Investment superstar. Thank you for crucial funding that puts Canadian authors in Ontario schools, libraries, bookstores, festivals & reading series.

”

The Writers' Union of Canada

“

We're lucky to have local artist John Marris join us to lead our youth in art projects such as pottery, drawing, painting and collage. Art is a valuable tool to express emotion and John has been an incredible mentor. This program would not be possible without help. We would like to acknowledge funding support from the Ontario Arts Council.

”

YES Shelter for Youth and Families on artist John Marris

“

OAC's commitment to fostering the arts has empowered us to continue bringing powerful stories to life through the voices of Indigenous youth across the country. Thanks to their support, we're able to create spaces where creativity, culture and community come together, inspiring change and celebrating the rich diversity of talent that exists within our communities.

”

Outside Looking In



“

We are incredibly grateful to the Ontario Arts Council for their generous support, which will help us to continue making a positive impact through inclusive arts in our community and beyond!

”

H'art Centre

# OAC SUPPORTS ...

# DEVELOPING CAREERS AND ARTS SERVICES

“

This annual support means that we can effectively create opportunities for craft artists to grow their careers, and promote the cultural and economic importance of craft across the province and beyond.

”

Craft Ontario



“

OAC's operational funding allows us to continue supporting, promoting and championing the arts in Ottawa. We are grateful for their continued commitment to the arts.

”

Ottawa Arts Council



# EMPOWERING ONTARIO'S ARTS SECTOR

The OAC bolsters Ontario's arts scene through research and statistical analyses of the arts and culture sectors. This data helps raise public awareness about the value of the arts, providing essential insights into the environment where artistic works are created and produced.

The OAC regularly measures the impact of its programs and consults with artists and arts organizations to stay attuned to the needs and growth of the arts.

We also offer in-person and online information sessions on applying for arts funding, covering topics like eligibility, the peer assessment process, and grant writing tips. For example, we offered specific CADAC (Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada) training. These sessions are hosted by OAC, or in collaboration with other organizations. Additionally, our staff frequently participate in public presentations and panel discussions to support the arts sector.



This summer, we offered a training session on how OAC can harness and use data for powerful storytelling about what the arts sector contributes to the province's economy and collective quality of life.



# NEW RESEARCH: ARTS ACROSS ONTARIO

This fall, we unveiled the preliminary results of Arts Across Ontario – the first-ever economic assessment of the arts in Ontario, in partnership with Nordicity.

These findings were announced at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, featuring the Honourable Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, in conversation with newly appointed OAC Chair Simon Foster.

- **Key findings:** Data showing how the arts drive job creation, community development, and economic vitality across Ontario.
- **Future initiatives:** Plans to foster a vibrant arts community and highlight the crucial role of artists and cultural organizations in society.

[Check out our recording of the livestream for the full conversation.](#)

“

Ontario’s arts and culture sectors are vital pillars of our economy, contributing tens of billions of dollars to our GDP annually and supporting nearly 300,000 jobs – and the Ontario Arts Council’s unwavering support has been instrumental in that success. The arts are the heartbeat of our communities, and our government is proud to provide support through the OAC. By investing in arts and culture, we are investing in both our economy and in the very fabric of our society, ensuring that every community, regardless of size, has access to the transformative power of artistic expression.

”

**Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming**



# NEW RESEARCH: ARTS ACROSS ONTARIO

The study's initial phase analyzed the province-wide impact of Ontario's culture sector, including GDP, jobs, the contribution of OAC-funded arts organizations to the economy, and arts and culture tourism spending.

Arts Across Ontario will also include a regional economic model that will highlight Ontario's culture sector GDP and jobs by region – including the impact by region of the organizations that OAC invests in through operating and project grants.

The final report will include case studies that explore the multiple ways in which OAC's funding is leveraged for economic, social and cultural development across the province. Finally, Arts Across Ontario will also capture how much the organizations we support impact cultural tourism for the province.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the research advisory committee for their time and contributions to the arts in Ontario.

Upkar Arora, Why Not Theatre  
Miranda Bouchard, Thinking Rock Community Arts  
Holly Cunningham, Creative Industries North Bay  
Sara Diamond, OCAD University  
Frédéric Dimanche, Toronto Metropolitan University  
Mike Douglas, Mississauga Arts Council  
Ester Gerassime, Ontario Chamber of Commerce  
Alex Glass, Arts Build Ontario  
Carol Greenwood, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

John Guerard, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation  
Kelly Langgard, Toronto Arts Council  
Jennifer Matotek, Art Windsor-Essex  
Mansi Mehta, Markham Arts Council  
Rebecca Mustard, City of Kawartha Lakes  
Cassandra Olsthoorn, Arts Net Ottawa  
Aubrey Reeves, Business for the Arts  
Erin Smith, Ontario Creates  
Tara Vinodrai, University of Toronto

Organizations supported by  
OAC contribute  
**\$1 billion annually**  
to Ontario's GDP  
(based on organization expenditures)

**25:1**  
For every \$1 OAC invests,  
\$25 is generated in other sources  
of revenue

Ontario's culture sector added  
**\$26.4 billion**  
to provincial GDP in 2022

More than  
**270,528 direct jobs**  
were supported by the culture sector  
across the province – more than the  
combined jobs in real estate, auto  
manufacturing, forestry and mining

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL 2024

# 60 YEARS OF ARTS FOR ALL ONTARIANS

OAC was founded 60 years ago when several visionary Ontarians approached John Robarts, Premier of Ontario, with an idea – to foster the creation and production of art for the benefit of all Ontarians. In 2024, we marked our 60th anniversary with the release of [Arts for All Ontarians](#) – a video that provides a whirlwind tour of what OAC funding has made possible since our founding in 1963.



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL 2024

# 2024 AWARD LAUREATES

OAC administers and presents awards recognizing artists for their contributions to the arts in Ontario. OAC also manages, on behalf of the Ontario Arts Foundation and the Government of Ontario, the peer assessment process of several awards, prizes and scholarships endowed outside the OAC.



COLLEEN PETERSON SONGWRITING AWARD  
LAUREATE

**LEAH HOLTOM**



PAULINE MCGIBBON AWARD LAUREATE

**TAWIAH BEN M'CARTHY**



OAC INDIGENOUS ARTS AWARD LAUREATES

**DAN COMMANDA**

EMERGING LAUREATE

**MONIQUE (MO THUNDER) BEDARD**



RUTH AND SYLVIA SCHWARTZ AWARDS LAUREATES

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK AWARD

**MELISSA MOLLEN DUPUIS**

**ELISE GRAVEL**

YOUNG ADULT / MIDDLE READER AWARD

**KEVIN SANDS**



LILLIAN ALLEN PRIZES

**CASSANDRA (MY'Z) MYERS**

EMERGING ARTIST

**LISA SHEN**

# PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Partnerships are investments of OAC's financial, human and other resources, made together with other organizations, towards strategic outcomes. They help support local, regional and rural artists and arts activities; build connections between the arts and other sectors, such as education, social services, tourism, business and health; and meet other strategic goals.

## BUSINESS / ARTS

Business / Arts partnered with the OAC on the [artsvest Regional](#) program in Ontario – helping participating arts organizations build capacity for generating diversified revenue through sponsorship training, mentorship and a matching funds incentive. [Learn more about artsvest.](#)

## CULTURE DAYS

This annual celebration of arts, culture and heritage takes place each autumn in communities across Ontario – proudly supported by OAC since its inception! The 2024 edition featured 1,853 free and pay-what-you-may activities, and hands-on arts and culture events hosted in 95 municipalities. [Learn more about Ontario Culture Days.](#)

## WORK IN CULTURE

Work in Culture partnered with OAC on the Catalyst and Transformation Fund, which provides funding to Ontario non-profit arts organizations to investigate, plan and implement substantive change in their operations. [Learn more about the CAT Fund.](#)

## ALLIANCE CULTURELLE DE L'ONTARIO

Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario partnered with OAC to showcase Ontario's vibrant Francophone arts scene at the Festival de la Francophonie, which celebrates Francophone arts, culture and entrepreneurship from all over the world. Through artist showcases and meetings with peer agencies, this partnership helped sow the seeds of future international collaborations while raising Ontario's profile across all five continents of la Francophonie. We were also grateful to collaborate with Ontario's Ministry of Francophone Affairs. [Learn more about this partnership.](#)

## SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO FILM ALLIANCE

OAC is partnering with three southwestern Ontario film festivals – the Forest City Film Festival, the Media City Film Festival and the Windsor International Film Festival – to support the rapidly growing media arts sector in this region. This collaboration will enhance capacity through vital professional and market development opportunities for local media artists and filmmakers, while fostering connections and knowledge sharing.





ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL 2024

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The OAC is directed by volunteer board members who come from various regions of the province. They are responsible for setting policies and overseeing the organization's operations. Board members play an important role as advocates for the arts in Ontario and as representatives of OAC in communities across the province.



## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 BOARD MEMBERS!

Simon Foster, Toronto (Chair)  
Rita Davies, Toronto (Outgoing chair)  
Dani Peters, Toronto (Vice-chair)  
Isabelle Boulerice-Leblanc, Embrun  
Twee Brown, London  
Alexandra De Gasperis, Toronto

Robin Jones, Westport  
Missy Knott, Curve Lake First Nation  
Mary Meffe, Toronto  
David Millen, Ottawa  
Lilly Obina, Ottawa  
Marek Ruta, Mississauga



# CREDITS

A big thank you to all the artists and arts organizations who have shared their photos with us. Together we can show the public and our elected representatives the extraordinary work of Ontario artists and arts organizations.

Shadowland Theatre, Toronto  
Nova Dance, Toronto  
Great Canadian Theatre Company, Ottawa  
Mosaic Press, Oakville  
Weengushk Film Institute, M'Chigeeng  
Sampradaya Dance Creations, Mississauga  
Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound  
Jorge Thielen Armand, London  
Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario Sudbury  
H'art Centre, Kingston  
Arushi Chopra, Newmarket  
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton  
London Symphonia, London  
Tarragon Theatre, Toronto  
DesignTO, Toronto  
Art Gallery of Peterborough, Peterborough  
Shadowland Theatre, Toronto  
Lauren Finisterre, Mississauga  
MDA Productions, Ottawa

We Live Up Here, Sudbury  
Canadian Arabic Orchestra, Mississauga  
Dusk Dances, Toronto  
La Nuit sur l'étang, Sudbury  
Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake  
Sharon, Lois and Bram, Toronto  
Jumblies Theatre, Toronto  
Toronto Fringe, Toronto  
Guelph Jazz Festival, Guelph  
Harbourfront Centre, Toronto  
Manifesto, Toronto  
Ballet Jörgen, Toronto  
Eden Mills Writers' Festival, Eden Mills  
imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, Toronto  
Multicultural Arts for Schools & Communities, Ottawa  
Propeller Dance, Ottawa  
Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay  
Ottawa Bluesfest, Ottawa  
Ricky Lima, Brampton



Excerpt from a comic strip created by Ricky Lima.

## SEE YOU IN 2025!



The Ontario Arts Council is an agency of the Government of Ontario.

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