



# Indigenous artists' Needs assessment report

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**Special thank you:**

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The staff and Board of Creative Manitoba

And, all our generous participants from across the province

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### Additional materials:

**2014 Indigenous Artist Survey Summary**

**2012 Indigenous Arts Focus Group Final Report**

## Creative Manitoba

Creative Manitoba is a member driven, not for profit organization dedicated to supporting the arts and cultural industries of Manitoba and helping to develop sustainable careers for those working in arts and culture.

### For a wide range of Manitoba based arts and cultural organizations, businesses and individual artists, Creative Manitoba provides:

- arts specific management training
- arts and cultural resources
- networking opportunities
- youth mentorship programs
- indigenous programming

### Creative Manitoba's Indigenous Arts Programs exist to:

- Support Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and art organizations to meet their professional goals pertaining to Indigenous art and cultural practices.
- Develop programs that foster the emergence of Indigenous cultural leadership at every level.
- Identify and/or promote initiatives and projects that focus on Indigenous contributions in arts, culture and heritage sectors, and work towards the revitalization and empowerment of our communities.

## Executive summary

In 2015, Creative Manitoba Indigenous Arts Programs coordinated three Indigenous Artist Circles—gatherings of Indigenous artists from across the province to share experiences, discuss their professional needs, and look to the future. This report includes all the information gathered at those Circles, as well as our two previous research projects—a full-day focus group in 2012 and a province-wide survey in 2014—and functions as a thorough needs assessment of Indigenous artists in Manitoba, a list of recommendations for our own arts and education programs, and works towards an increase in culturally relevant programs and resources for Indigenous artists in Manitoba.

### The overall recommendations from Indigenous artists for Indigenous arts programming, include:

1. **Mentorship programs**—More holistic mentorship programs are needed for youth interested in arts careers. Older artists are ready and able to lead the young ones.
2. **Access to cultural teachings**—Artists would like more access to Indigenous teachings, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and to understand protocols around cultural symbols and knowledge.

**Indigenous artists would like more access to Indigenous teachings, and to understand protocols around cultural symbols and knowledge.**

**The vast majority of participants preferred cultural approaches to mainstream resources.**

3. **Community building**—Artists would like more access to circles, collectives and spaces to gather. Artists are interested in making groups, finding places to share opportunities, and creating collaborative work and informal mentorships within community. Organizations need to provide networking opportunities, and places to showcase and share work with the greater community.
4. **Business and entrepreneurial education**—Artists need access to “how to get started” business materials and learning opportunities.\* Artists want to know where to learn and improve artistic practice, but also need to know “how to manage other aspect of business” and would like business learning resources, such as time management, money matters, and legalities.  
*\*“Learning opportunities” are not limited to formal classroom experiences. In fact, most participants recommended alternatives, such as one on one mentorships and meetings, online resources, and collective and collaborative group settings rather than classes or courses.”*
5. **Funding resources**—Artists would like assistance navigating “how to access money” and to know more about how to get grants, help to apply for grants, where to find bursaries for supplies, and where to find programs for learning. Mid-career artists and those approaching their elder years require specialized funding sources and resources as well. There is a huge need for increased support through other services, such as housing, access to work spaces, and financial sustainability for artists from all disciplines.
6. **More access to employment opportunities**—Most notably, artists are interested in working in schools and community organizations, and would like to learn more about how to get started and prepare for working in the schools and with student groups in other settings. Amongst artists, there is a significant need for training in developing curriculum and working with student groups.

The needs of Indigenous artists in Manitoba are not very different from the needs of artists everywhere, but their overall experience can be very different. The need for connections to cultural teachings and practices were noted in every conversation, and the vast majority of participants preferred cultural approaches to mainstream resources. Working toward all of these recommendations will strengthen Indigenous art and artists in our province. At Creative Manitoba, we have already begun to implement these recommendations and to create programs that fulfill these needs. We look forward to continuing to work for the success of Indigenous artists in Manitoba.

## Background

Creative Manitoba’s Indigenous Arts Programs seeks to fulfill an appropriate and accessible role in the Winnipeg arts community. Since our inception, we have actively initiated research and feedback directly from the Indigenous business, arts and greater community.

Previous to this Needs Assessment, there were two other notable projects—a province wide survey of Indigenous artists in 2014, and one-day, intensive focus group involving several members of the Winnipeg Indigenous arts and business community in 2012. Both provided key insights and valuable information that Creative Manitoba has used to build the Indigenous Programs office.

The 2015 Indigenous Artist Circles were intended to build upon this previous research. This Needs Assessment is a record and analysis of the Circle findings in particular, but the conclusions build on all earlier research as well.

The needs of Indigenous artists in Manitoba are not very different from the needs of artists everywhere, but their overall experience can be very different.

## Project goals

Last year, Creative Manitoba coordinated a province-wide Indigenous Artist Survey that included responses from artists of several disciplines and gathered information about our practices, educational history, challenges and professional needs. There were a total of 94 participants.

For the second phase of this research, Creative Manitoba coordinated three Indigenous Artist Circles throughout the first half of 2015. The goal was to compliment the information gathered from last year’s survey with qualitative responses in an in-person, focus group style gathering, and to further inform Creative Manitoba program development. This information was intended to create a thorough needs assessment of Indigenous Artists in Manitoba, a list of recommendations and best practices of support, and work towards an increase in culturally relevant programs and resources.

## Method

Each circle was planned to be three hours in length, have a maximum of 15 participants, and begin and end with a blessing from an Elder or Knowledge Keeper.

We invited survey respondents, members of our Advisory Committee and other Indigenous artists from across the province to participate in the Circles. Questions were poised based on the topics that arose during the survey and centered on participants’ personal artistic practices, professional goals, and needs relating to each specific topic.

**The needs of Indigenous artists in Manitoba are not very different from the needs of artists everywhere, but their overall experience can be very different.**

**The intention was to generate discussion and thought that created thoughtful answers.**

Circles took place in Winnipeg, Friday, February 27 and Thursday, March 26, and in Brandon on Saturday, May 9, 2015. Participant totals were 13, 10, and 10 respectively. There were also four artists who participated individually via email. (Total circle respondents: 37, plus the survey's 94 = 131 total respondents).

Each Circle met as a full group, and we all shared food before we began the work. All Circles were mirrored after a traditional sharing circle, and began with a Knowledge Keeper(s) who shared a prayer or song, and led a smudge ceremony. In each Circle the Knowledge Keeper(s) also participated in the Circle discussions as a full participant.

The group then shared a round of introductions. Once everyone was properly introduced, the full group was broken up into randomly selected smaller groups. Each small group was poised with the same question and when completed, responses were posted for the whole group to view. Each question was discussed for anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes, and each Circle covered three–five questions.

Questions were designed to be open ended and respondents were free to interpret the question however they wished. The intention was to generate discussion and thought and that created thoughtful answers. The questions were as follows:

**As Indigenous artists:**

1. What are our greatest needs and/or challenges?
2. What are our biggest strengths and/or opportunities?
3. How does your culture influence your work as an artist?
4. How did you learn your art?
5. What are your biggest questions? What do you need the most help with?
6. What are your recommendations for future generations?

Questions one and two were asked in every Circle, questions three–five were only asked for one Circle, and Question six was asked of two Circles.

At two or the three Circles, participants switched small groups several times throughout their time, but one Circle chose to remain in the same small groups for the duration of their time together. In completion, the full group met once again to share concluding thoughts, and the Knowledge Keepers ended with words or a song.

Each Circle took no more than three hours, including eating and meeting time. Each participant was paid a \$50 honourarium for their professional time.

## Project successes

- We were able to extend our reach from the survey and include more male respondents, and more diversity in socio-economic, education and experiential levels.
- We were able to expand the scope and depth of the questions and retained significant qualitative data.
- A surprise result was that the Circles themselves created one of the needs most often indicated—provided an open space where artists could network and connect with each other. In fact, two collectives were developed out of two separate circles, one a collective of fabric artists/fashion designers who had never met before they attend their Circle. They are now meeting and organizing as a group. Another multi-disciplinary group began after our time in Brandon, and a Facebook group has started facilitating updates and networking opportunities outside of Winnipeg.

## Project limitations

- We were not able to travel to the North or non-urban places.
- Some participants do reside in rural locations, but none from significantly isolated places.
- Due to the nature of the Method used, participants self-recorded and therefore much of the organic discussion wasn't listed.
- It was important to pay participants for their time but this limited our budget significantly.

## Response summary

1. Create a mentorship program for youth, older artists leading the young ones.
2. Help artists access to Indigenous teachings, understand protocols around cultural symbols and knowledge.
3. **Help access more circles, collectives and spaces**—artists are interested in making groups, finding places to share opportunities, creating collaborative work and informal mentorship within community.
4. Networking opportunities, places to showcase and share work.
5. **“How to get started” materials and learning opportunities**—how to start as a business; where to learn and improve artistic practice.
6. **“How to manage other aspect of business” materials and learning opportunities**—time management; money business matters; legalities.

**The Circles themselves created one of the needs most often indicated—they provided an open space where artists could network and connect with each other.**

7. **“How to access money” materials and learning opportunities**—how to get grants and get help to apply for grants; where to find bursaries for supplies; where to find programs and funding for mid-career artists and those approaching their elder years; there is a huge need for increased support through other services, such as housing, access to work spaces, and financial sustainability.
8. **Help more artists work in the schools**—how to get started and prepare for working in the schools, need for training in developing curriculum.

## Response summary by question

### As Indigenous Artists, what are our greatest needs and/or challenges?

- There are no councils, or juried art shows or festival. We need authoritative bodies, like an elder council for artists; mainstream associations are too limited for most of our art forms.
- **Money**—questions about grants, how to and help with, grant writer resource person is needed, how to and more to access bursaries for supplies and travel.
- **Exposure**—how to promote outside of Indigenous community, access to agent representation, social media know how, how to create promotional videos, find new places and audiences.
- **Outlier art categories**—those not covered by art and within the art funding structure, need more specialized workshops for outlier art forms, most artists are multi-disciplinary, and most of us are contemporary and resist the “pigeon hole” of what mainstream thinks Indigenous should look like.
- **Spaces**—access to spaces to meet, places to work, places to showcase, more rural/Indigenous art centres, offices in smaller centres that cater to Ind. Artists—Brandon needs an art office/ space, community centres open for artists
- **Mentorship/apprenticeship**—more hands on opportunities for real networking and experiences, practical and technical knowledge.
- **Connection**—community, culture, teachings, history.
- **Jobs**—lack of contract jobs for Indigenous Artists, and they feel like they “have to go mainstream” lack of “meaningful” work, not just term job.
- **Artists**—we need a catalogue of artists, places to contact, knowledge of other and what they are doing, a hub of information on opportunities, jobs, other artists, lack of “getting out there”
- **Practical**—financial support, stability, socio-economic goals, bus/ car/transportation, housing—social housing for artists, day job creates inflexibility, time and time management
- **Business acumen**—how to build a business, make a business plan, selling art—value of work, pricing, stocking, etc.

**Most of us are contemporary and resist the “pigeon hole” of what mainstream thinks Indigenous should look like.**

- **Specialized programming for “at-risk” or “high risk” groups**—single parents, homeless, inner city groups, youth—artists in these groups and for artists to serve these groups
- **Proper critique and criticism**—lateral violence versus constructive professional criticism

### As Indigenous Artists, what are our biggest strengths and/or opportunities?

- **Community**—high volunteer rate, acceptance with each other, friend and family, our mentors are right here, supportive community.
- **Networking**—opportunities are right there, pow wow/festival circuit, think outside the box for showcase opportunities—use someone’s home or university places.
- **Resiliency**—humor, diversity, resourcefulness, Ingenious/ Indigenous, survival.
- **Multi- disciplinary artists**—high rate of, combination of contemporary and traditional, diversify what is out there; the Canada Council for the Arts new model.
- Elders/tradition—self/knowledge.
- **The great institutions and organizations that we do have:** Manitoahbee, Aboriginal Music Week, Indigenous Writers Collectives, Urban Shaman Gallery.
- There is greater rep out there, greater exposure, ie: Winnipeg Folk Festival.
- **Practical**—artists can work from home.
- “The field is wide open right now”.
- “Our greatest strength is keeping our art traditional and as our numbers grow so do our opportunities”.

### How does your culture influence your work as an artist?

- Political
- “Art anchors and defines discovers identity”
- Challenge regulating influences from settler society
- Incorporate teachings in work
- Stronger sense of identity with teachings
- Only one respondent firmly stated that they do NOT believe culture has any influence on their work in the art world
- “Art anchors and defines discovers identity”
- “My cultural heritage and its reclamation is the driving force in my work”
- “My culture is a source of inspiration”
- “I build upon their work and influence”
- “They give me guidance”

**Our greatest strength is keeping our art traditional and as our numbers grow so do our opportunities.**

## Art gives me a sense of purpose, spiritual fulfillment and intellectual satisfaction

- “When I work, I hear the old ones teaching me.”
- “Art gives me a sense of purpose, spiritual fulfillment and intellectual satisfaction, whether it’s painting, writing or beading. The pride I feel as an Aboriginal artist is incredible. For me, it’s creating my medicine.”

### How did you learn your art?

- Watching, grandparents, internet, by accident, eavesdropping, sharing, all of these and altogether too
- “I was born to be an artist”
- “I began ‘learning’ at 5 years old, my mother, aunty and grandmother taught me. I have been doing the ‘thread’ arts since then, including; crochet, knitting, and sewing. I have always been doing this work. I went ‘public’ about a year and half ago. I take classes where possible to ‘learn’ new skills, ie: I recently took a ‘baby wraps’ class (leather and beading), and am registered for a ‘moccasin’ class. I have beaded in the past, but never knew how or attempted sewing with leather (besides small medicine bags, etc.)”.

### As an Indigenous Artist, what are your biggest questions?

#### What do you need the most help with?

- **Funding**—how to get, how to make proposals, specialized grants, like for research
- Networking, how to, showcasing opps, ability to sell your art as a product, social media, consistency, keeping stock, advertising as groups, get people out there
- **Workshops**—places to learn, how to start, where to go, lack of resources in smaller communities, how to make money
- **Legalities**—understanding the ins and outs
- “My goal is to be self-sufficient”

### What are your recommendations for future generation?

- **Languages/Culture**—learn you language, empowering knowledge, land based programs, nature/medicinal teachings, access for empowered groups
- **Funding**=know how, more money/programs, include outlier disciplines
- **Versatility**—be flexible, expand to fit needs,
- **Marketing**—more artist events to share art, utilize technology
- **Programs**—after school, in-house mentorships, intergenerational opportunities, to empower areas and groups, youth, artists in the schools influence curriculum so get in the schools
- **Authority**—elder council for the arts, celebrate institutions that support us, adjudications and critiques within circles and groups

- **Cultural awareness**—bring this to non-Indigenous people in the arts, make them aware, improve communication between us and them.
- “Know where you come from”
- “If I were in charge I would get society as a whole to recognize and honor our art as a legitimate way of making a living, a legitimate education tool within art/gender/culture/identity/healing and therapeutic tool; living is more than money.”
- “I find at this point, I am ‘planting seeds’ for the future youth. I try to get into the communities, to talk/teach about our ‘ways’, and include sewing, ie: Moss bags, cradleboards, star blankets. In the last year I have had the opportunity to visit 3 communities.”

## Next steps

Following the completion of the third focus group in May 2015, and at the recommendation of our Advisory Council, Creative Manitoba Indigenous began working with community partners to provide more programming for Indigenous artists. The following is a list of the programs currently under development.

1. **Mentorship for youth, older artists leading the young ones**—Creative Manitoba Indigenous Art Program has written an introduction to a year-long, culturally specific, holistic, arts mentorship program for Indigenous youth, ages 18–29, and is currently seeking partnerships. As a part of this proposal, we would like to hire a part-time Elder in Residence. We are currently seeking partnerships for this program.
2. **Access to Indigenous teachings, knowledge about how to use symbols and culture**—Starting in August 2015, Creative Manitoba Indigenous Programs, in partnership with Manitoba Moon Voices, hosted weekly circles for Indigenous artists and community members. These circles have included teachings and cultural knowledge. Going forward into 2016, these Circles will provide monthly opportunities for Indigenous artists, and we are developing a listing of cultural and art groups across the city, and other opportunities for artists to share their projects and artistry.
3. **Networking opportunities, places to showcase and share work**—We’ve created social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram\*; We have hired a Communications Consultant to help promote us in the Indigenous community; Utilizing the existing Creative Manitoba network, and the Advisory committee, we will continue to promote our program in the Indigenous and arts communities.

**I find at this point, I am ‘planting seeds’ for the future youth.**

**We were pleasantly surprised that the Circles themselves became a resource, and artists connected and shared information with one another.**

4. **Circles, collectives, and spaces**—We continue to assist collectives in their ventures; We are looking into opportunities for spaces for rent/use at 245 McDermot Avenue; We have hosted the weekly Circles in partnership with Manitoba Moon Voices; and will continue to connect to opportunities as they arise.
5. **“How to get started” business skills**—We hope to further enhance our online resources and participate in the 245 McDermot blog postings; in September, our Program Manager attended the inaugural Train the Trainer session of Aboriginal Art of Managing your own Career by the Cultural Human Resources Commission in Ottawa, Ontario and we will host a Train the Trainer in Manitoba in March 2016; We also hope to create materials to advertise the Indigenous Art Program as a resource.
6. **Other business skills**—Time management, money business matters, legalities—Aboriginal Art of Managing your own Career will cover much of this information.
7. **“How to access money”**—We will be the only provider of Aboriginal Art of Managing your own Career in Manitoba; We will continue to learn and grow our knowledge and training in the business of the arts.
8. **Working with schools and in the community**—We are working directly with school divisions, community groups/organizations and Manitoba Arts Council to create opportunities for paid artist work and training; We would like to develop a Directory of Indigenous artists in Manitoba that can be accessed by schools and groups seeking this specialized knowledge; Starting in January 2016, a third session ozhitooon jii-miigiweng —to create and share will take place. This program introduces artists and teachers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous to Indigenous concepts, art and lesson plans.

## **Final comments**

We were genuinely surprised how many artists didn't know where to access money or all of the resources that are available to them. In this regard, we will dedicate a significant amount of time and budget to promoting our services and informing artists about all the resources and funding available to them.

We were pleasantly surprised that the Circles themselves became a resource, and artists connected and shared information with one another. As a result, we have partnered with Manitoba Moon Voices and are planning monthly, drop-in circles for artists to connect to each other and to cultural teachings.

We found that Creative Manitoba Indigenous Programs needs to increase our presence in community and online, and will dedicate significant time and funding to this integral aspect to our work.

We also need to research other topics arising, such as developing councils, and helping at-risk/high risk groups.

We are working at strengthening and empowering our Advisory Committee, not only to help us develop relevant, accessible programming but also to provide an Indigenous voice to the many artistic endeavors that are happening in Winnipeg, ie: the Creative Cluster, Manitobans for the Arts, Creative Manitoba Board of Directors.

**We are working at strengthening and empowering our advisory committee.**

## Appendix A

### Full list of participants

#### Winnipeg

1. Kevin Anderson
2. Anonymous Participant
3. Arlea Ashcroft
4. Shayla Elizabeth
5. Trevor Greyeyes
6. Neepekan Hunt
7. Iris Lauzon
8. Maeengan Linklater
9. Barb and Clarence Nepinak
10. Sean Parenteau
11. Val Vint
12. Danielle Winfield
13. Wanda Luna
14. Tanis Thomas
15. Shayla Elizabeth
16. Kevin Lee Burton
17. Rhonda Head
18. Althea Guiboche
19. Moneca Sinclair
20. Dustin Roads
21. Elizabeth Denny
22. Chantal Wilson

#### Brandon

1. Melissa Wastasecoote
2. Viola Fleury
3. Robert Ironstand
4. David Ironstand
5. Anonymous Participant
6. John Stepler
7. Charlene Bienvenu
8. Susie McPherson
9. Anonymous Participant
10. Anonymous Participant

#### Individual participants via email (various locations in Manitoba):

1. Roxanne Shuttleworth
2. Liz Barron
3. George Cuyler
4. Lorraine Mayer



Leonard Bighetty poses with his mural painted at Creative Manitoba.

## Appendix B

### Creative Manitoba's Indigenous Arts Advisory Committee and Document Review

1. Arlea Ashcroft
2. Ko'ona Cochrane
3. Stuart Desnomie
4. Iris Lauzon
5. Tracey Longbottom
6. Victoria MacIntosh
7. Barbara Nepinak
8. Clarence Nepinak
9. Tanis Thomas
10. Daina Warren

## Appendix C

### Full list of findings by question\*

(\*Numbered groups are not necessarily the same with each question. Often groups were rotated within each Circle.)

#### Question 1: As Indigenous Artists, what are our greatest needs and/or challenges?

##### Group 1

- We need an Aboriginal designers council
- Wanda Luna—Studio Luna—got charitable status—how do we get this?
- Black Women's Congress of Manitoba—we need one
- Exposure
- Proposal writing
- Discouraging—no info for design—we need special categories for art that falls through the cracks
- Inventory—sell to live, can't accumulate
- Communal rental studio
- Promotion outside of NDN community

##### Group 2

- Challenges—accessing qualified talent to fill public requests
- Limited exposure
- Funding and resources, payment for services, accessibility is a rigid structure
- No set standard to define artist
- Needs—indigenous arts coalitions, support groups, ie: IWC, basic needs met with employment vs. our work,
- Grant writing circles—helping one another
- For education institutions to ensure that talent has clear criminal records and child abuse check
- Artist bank (database)
- Non-indigenous organizations need to be more open and less reluctance to work differently instead of hiding behind their policies and procedures, rules and regulations.



Thunderbird House, Winnipeg

- Need universal acceptance, not to be slotted into mainstream education with same expectation and standards
- More mentorship and employment in the arts
- “Limited Exposure”
- “Artist bank (data base)”

### Group 3

- Lack of adjudication and feedback from other artists in the field, lack of growth
- Training dollars and PD—hands on training and theory
- Accreditation vs self taught
- Better/ more agent representation in music industry
- Institutional barriers
- Dedicated funding for urban/rural arts centres
- More mentorships and apprenticeships
- Writing
- Practical knowledge
- Technical knowledge
- Historical knowledge
- Knowledge of indigenous artists (list)
- Lack driver’s license—accessibility to places like schools
- Aboriginal visual artist catalogue
- Being recognized by the mainstream

### Group 4

- Stability
- Transportation
- Marketing
- Access to internet
- Time (better management of it)
- Writing up proposals for workshops, approaching agencies, how much to charge?
- Learn social media, making promo videos, book trailers
- Networking, public relations
- When in a day job - not supported, judged
- Crossing boundaries, contracts or not, in fundraising, volunteer management
- Risk management, insurances, learning of mentorship, the business of art,
- Financials, ie: business plan
- Finding resources, networking
- Safe, reliable, secure childminding
- Knowledge of grants, where they are, how to write them
- Available bursaries, awards
- Business versus artist
- Artist networking
- MONEY!
- Housing—social housing for artists
- Access to affordable food
- Free supplies for workshops



Sacred Circle at Creative Manitoba.

- Give to the homeless, educate, teach them to be creative, learn arts, various arts, what they make can be used for fundraising and for themselves to sell, teach them to become business minded
- Make a program for the homeless for single moms and youth at risk

### Group 5

- Money!!!!
- Performance, backing agents, central contact figure head, someone whose focus is grant writing
- Mentorship on various levels
- Info sessions of funding sources and processes
- Central hub of info, ie: Manitoba music site

### Group 6

- Isolation—home alone a lot
- The value of doing art without \$ being received
- Time to do the art
- Knowing “how to”
- Being ‘pigeon holed’ as “Native” artists and certain ‘style’
- Pressure to conform
- Difficult to do “self evaluations”
- Explain “indigenous space” when invited to an indigenous “workshop”
- Lateral criticism within community
- Business part of art
- Explaining the value of your work
- Validation from society of your work
- Funding
- Grant writing
- Community support, re: space you do not have to rent
- Book space at Creative Manitoba without cost
- Skill building to ask for \$, self confidence (from historical oppression, etc)

### Group 7

- A Brandon office for Indigenous artists—a place to find support and access to funding
- Handcraft store in Brandon, there was a shopper mall in 2001 but it was sustaining
- Beadwork office—a community workspace
- More internet space and resources, an Indigenous artist café, an evening event, maybe use the Friendship centre or the FC can partner
- Community driven passionate artists, a separate entity from other groups/etc.

### Group 8

- Personal motivation, less procrastination
- Inspiration
- Knowledge of how to be a writer, resources on how to get started
- Mentors—how to find one

**Make a program for single moms and youth at risk.**

- Where to find likeminded people in Brandon
- Create a local Aboriginal artist group for traditional and contemporary artists of all genres
- Make sure the definition of artist is known to all people\*
- Encourage more workshops by aboriginal artists for youth
- Funding

#### Group 9

- Money, need to find grants
- Time – families, jobs, etc
- Finding materials
- Proposal writing
- Representation/commercialism
- Creative spaces to work
- Marketing of product
- Motivation
- Website \$
- Intellectual property rights, how to/know how

#### Responses via email:

- The struggles specific to my situation are the lack of opportunities to work in the province of Manitoba. There are limited, if any, contract opportunities to work in the indigenous arts and culture sector, and for me, outside of the indigenous arts and into the ‘mainstream’. Mainstream being everything. That is the biggest struggle. To be able to find contracts and make a living wage.
- “One of the needs is more opportunity for contracts, within any arts and cultural sector. I don’t need to be only involved in the indigenous arts. There is a lack of movement within the arts and cultural sector in Manitoba, and individuals in ‘jobs’ are not moving or doing any succession planning. Without movement of the current senior people in ‘jobs’ there are no opportunities to expand, grow and develop my arts management skills”.
- The lack of ‘jobs’ for all levels within the arts and cultural sector in Manitoba is limited, and there are some challenges with emerging arts administrators to be able to find employment and develop their own skills and abilities. Some of the arts organizations ‘hire’ indigenous staff for only the term of any funding specific to indigenous arts administrators. There is no funding for the orgs to staff after the specific indigenous funding is done. I feel that is an abuse of the funding systems in place for indigenous arts administrators. The candidate may develop new skills, but the organization doesn’t hire them after the funding is done. That is a huge struggle and more development can happen around that.
- As a fashion designer, there is very little funding (ie. Manitoba/ Canadian Arts Foundation) for the ‘thread’ arts, be it shows, projects, etc.
- There are very little training opportunities for anyone interested in this particular area (genre?) of the arts ie. fashion, fabrics, etc.

**That is the biggest struggle. To be able to find contracts and make a living wage.**

- For any Artist, the biggest need is reasonably priced supplies, the challenge would be to get any establishment to showcase our art.
- I also think mainstream awareness of Aboriginal art is still hampered by total focus on Woodland streams.
- More art shows featuring a combination of art would be awesome.

#### Question 2: As Indigenous Artists, what are our biggest strengths and/or opportunities?

##### Group 1

- Years of experience in design and creation
- Community support, not \$
- “INJUNuity”
- Today—networking (events like today)
- Neechi Commons—space available for rentals
- Multi media artists do it all!

##### Group 2

- We’re in Maclean’s!
- “Speed dating”
- Resilient activists
- Humour/healing/bannock—we transformed a colonizing tool to nourish us
- Elders—our children are aware
- Strong value system
- Help bring greater positive race relations by offering out worldviews and perspectives to mainstream.
- Art speaks a universal languages. We can wake up the world.
- Great rapport with building relationships
- Pow wow circuit—largest underground economy
- Trading routes—barter system
- Strong education “system” wisdom keepers share
- Give a way—we volunteer 3X more than “average” Canadians

##### Group 3

- We have the best bannock
- Resiliency
- Education
- Cultural knowledge—self-knowledge
- Cultural institutions—USG, Ndinawe, IWC, Manito Ahbee
- Humour
- Largest Aboriginal population in Canada
- Recognition within aboriginal community
- Survival
- Spirituality/Traditional Knowledge—strong belief systems
- Combining contemporary with traditional art ie: leg-wrestling artist T. Houle
- Elder artists are emerging
- Cost of living is affordable (Winnipeg)

**For any artist, the biggest need is reasonably priced supplies.**

**We are very prepared to share our art/knowledge.**

#### **Group 4**

- Friends, family, spirituality
- Funded education
- Teaching
- Working from home
- Storytelling
- Mentoring others
- Creativity
- Supportive environment
- Learning importance of prayer
- Resourceful
- Indigenous knowledge
- First Nations art community is welcoming (for the most part) and supportive
- We are very prepared to share our art/knowledge
- Great programs/groups like, Manitoba Music (AMP) and writers groups, such as the Indigenous Writers Collective
- Funders like, Manitoba Arts Council, Winnipeg Arts Council
- Events like, Manito-Ahbee
- Places like Creative Manitoba, Artspace, Urban Shaman Gallery, Culture Days
- Social media
- Increased representation of Indigenous art @Wpg Folk Festival
- A lot of talented, award winning musicians, nationally and internationally recognized
- Art as a voice or means of educating “mainstream” on the Indigenous experience
- Strength, courage to go against what is expected, ie: working 9-5 for the sake of your art (risk leaving a stable job to take an artistic opportunity/path)

#### **Group 5**

- Strengths: Indigenous
- Community based
- Ingenious (adaptable)
- Respect from our artist men
- Resilience
- Now is good—“This Time is our greatest Gift!”
- Manito-Ahbee and other festival are growing
- Aboriginal Music Week, the various events, etc
- Access to our elders, ageism is not prevalent
- Opportunities: diversity in funding is increasing from funders
- More collaboration between artists and crafters
- Break moulds, change perspectives
- Collaborations and international artists using technology for promo
- WAC, MAC, CCA can be approached and can open doors

#### **Group 6**

- Our originality, and the ‘newness’ of fashion/clothing/regalia genre. There were at one time only 2-3 designers (known), now we have dozens, and more ‘up and coming’
- The ‘field’ is new, and wide open.

#### **Group 7**

- Culture marketing
- International world storytelling
- Spirituality unique
- Artistic nature realization
- Survival—resources
- Brandon office/org—opportunity right here for mentorships, workshops, etc
- In a good way, the seven teachings free to be yourself
- Artist’s directory for the Westman Area—supports and opportunities
- Connection artists
- Revamping artists
- Change lead by artists

#### **Group 8**

- Indianness in the art—traditional looking art
- Aboriginal artists teaching aboriginal art
- Society valuing aboriginal art
- Using art to teach culture and to teach our youth, teach traditions
- Lots of opportunities on web/ social media, opportunity to connect with others, places to advertise, teach younger artist to engage in their culture
- Empower artists to engage other artists
- Expression—art café work and engage,
- Technology the virtual world is far and near

#### **Group 9**

- Humour
- Tradition
- Sense of community
- Networking
- Festival/Pow wow
- Other gatherings—families, reserves
- Art—cultural
- Diversity
- Indigenous businesses, training
- Spirituality
- Mentorships

**There are lots of opportunities on social media to connect with others, places to advertise and teach younger artists to engage in their culture.**

**The greatest opportunity is to have the exhibitions, performances, publications that are not just targeted to Indigenous.**

**Responses via email:**

- The greatest opportunity is to have the exhibitions, performances, publications that are not just targeted to Indigenous. In specific for visual/new media and film, those artists don't have to limit their exposure to only indigenous spaces. They have an opportunity to grow their careers within the 'mainstream'. I don't want to use the term mainstream in this dialogue, however, there isn't another word that I can find to fit. There are numerous opportunities for exhibition, festivals (music, film, plays) and other sources that artists can participate in. It doesn't mean they have to drop their indigenous influence on their art works.
- There seems to be a chasm between indigenous and mainstream and the artist's ability to participate. The lack of information, confidence maybe?
- There are mandated descriptions within all arts grants that define what an artist is. For visual art, the minimum is the creation of a body of work, exhibition history and possible critical discourse and in collections. Curators, not just indigenous but all curators could be called up on for studio visits to be able to see the work of the artists and understand their influences in their creations.
- From some of the responses from the participants' onsite for the gathering—there was a discussion about more money, creation of a specific groups and a database.
- The services offered by Creative Manitoba fits into all those categories. As well, there are associations for every possible art form available. I'm not sure why that information isn't shared or knowledge of those associations are used by indigenous artists. Samples would be the Independent media arts alliance for new media and film, the Artist run centre network for ARC galleries, the Manitoba music and sound, the Aboriginal Music group—theatre and dance have their own associations. It is up to the individual artist to get involved and make the effort to know and have that information available. For call for submissions for visual artists, it's up to the artist to have their portfolio together. If they need assistance, there are workshops at every possible Artist Run Centre, MAWA has a great mentor program, Creative Manitoba has workshops as do most of the associations.
- There was a suggestion that a new organization be developed based on the Black Women of Manitoba...that is already done through other Aboriginal organizations in Winnipeg. Again, it's about getting that information out there.

- A full research project into all these services available could be a solution. The project could put all the information into a book for distribution in all centres, all museums, galleries, any arts and culture and all aboriginal service organizations. The book could be the resource that artists are looking for. It could include how to apply for grants, and when the workshops are and call for submissions and responding and every other possible step it takes to be a practicing artist in any medium.
- Perhaps it would be Creative Manitoba that would or could advocate on behalf of the indigenous artists and develop the links between Creative Manitoba and all the other associations in the cultural sector and share that information.
- I'm more about finding solutions to the issues, rather than staying on the issues.
- Our greatest strength is keeping our art traditional and as our numbers grow, so do our opportunities.
- I am particularly interested in the ones about office/building. This would be such an advantage. I remember quite a few years back when we had a very small Aboriginal art gallery. Vince (darn forgot his last name.) I believe ran it. The city claimed it wanted to improve downtown so perhaps we could access one if the buildings for minimal rent.
- Another option for space is a house. In Thunder Bay there was a house used every Christmas with amazing pieces.
- Anyway many concerns like office, space for creating art and mentorship as well as workshops on legal issues, pricing could be held there. Most importantly it could foster a greater sense of community. Not sure how we could get a house especially in an accessible area. Perhaps the university could provide some space, Cathy has a beading club going so why not open it to the community artists once a week. We also have a writing (academic) workshop in the library for scholars wanting to write in a quiet place perhaps we could do that as well like Cathy's beading club.
- They have a lovely space where Cathy beads and if we could get grant money for supplies...well it's something that do temporarily until permanent space could be found.

**Our greatest strength is keeping our art traditional and as our numbers grow, so do our opportunities.**

**Question 3–5 \* (\*Each question asked at one Circle and interspersed among the email respondents)**

**Question 3: How does your culture influence your work as an artist?**

**Group 1**

- Political influences
- Political and personal perseverance
- Keep culture alive
- Passing knowledge
- Cree 60s scoop
- Art anchors/defines/discovers identity

**Group 2**

- Incorporate teachings into poetry—day to day work
- Forces us to adapt to mainstream
- “My cultural heritage and its reclamation is the driving force in my work”
- Challenging the negative influences from settler society
- Youth and elders

**Group 3**

- Stronger sense of identity
- Language
- They facilitate community support, help bring issues to the fore front
- Source of inspiration
- Help with identifying personal gifts
- Build upon their work and influence
- Maintain faith? Northern gospel music
- Guidance

**Respondents via email:**

- As a senior arts manager, my culture doesn't influence my practice.
- Art is an escape from the modern world, when I work I hear the old ones teaching me.
- Art on every level is important to me and I feel specific areas are considered craft to mainstream people. Folks need to be educated on the breadth of art.
- Our sense of community is a great asset but also a problem when it comes to finding enough physical space to build the community.
- Art gives me a sense of purpose, spiritual fulfillment and intellectual satisfaction whether it's painting, writing or beading. The pride I feel as an Aboriginal artist is incredible. For me creating is my medicine.

**Question 4: How did you learn your art?**

**Group 1**

- Started by doodling
- Started out of necessity—needed money
- Watching (visual)

- Reading, research, Google
- Practice
- Had to be resourceful
- Grandparents taught me
- Taking things apart and reusing it to make something else
- Family influence
- Had to make own toys
- School
- Pow wows
- Internet: Pinterest, YouTube, Etsy
- Buy the materials and equipment
- Start with a good cup of coffee
- Re-creation of interests
- Creating/crafting with friends
- Workshops, classes, presentations
- Many start by accident, when the opportunity presents itself

**Group 2**

- Formal training via music teachers via random phone directory searches and then continued training
- Informal mentorship via writing group, but also since childhood, committed to being an artist
- My grandfather taught me my artistic crafts, via childhood art practice/play
- Stumbled into it via an all Aboriginal film program at a recognized university, motivated by assumptions because of my light skin, wanted to challenge and celebrate my Cree background

**Group 3**

- Family, books, YouTube, photos, self taught, magazines, reading, observing, mentorship, job, workshops
- Why? Therapeutic, posting from library, writer group, open mic, open jams, busking, street performance, prayer, spoken word events, eavesdropping during adult get-togethers (card games), learning piece by piece (literally—sewing), trial and error, teaching, the act of learning by sharing
- I was born to be an artist!

**Respondent via email:**

- I began 'learning' at 5 years old, my mother, aunty and grandmother taught me. I have been doing the 'thread' arts since then, including; crochet, knitting, and sewing. I have always been doing this work, I went 'public' about a year and half ago. I take classes where possible to 'learn' new skills, ie. I recently took a 'baby wraps' class (leather and beading), and am registered for a 'moccasin' class. I have beaded in the past, but never knew how or attempted sewing with leather (besides small medicine bags, etc.)

**Art is an escape from the modern world, when I work I hear the old ones teaching me.**

**My grandfather taught me my artistic crafts, via childhood art practice/play**

**There are many grants available for research involving Aboriginal communities.**

**Question 5: As an Indigenous Artist, what are your biggest questions? What do you need the most help with?**

**Group 1**

- Funding
- Mentorship
- Promotion/self marketing
- Networking locally
- Where to showcase
- Indigenous artist community
- Keeping indigenous art authentic
- Artist responsibility to youth/culture
- Keeping art healthy and healing

**Group 2**

- Artist group council
- Script what next step
- Publisher
- Contacts
- Brandon—landscape (political challenge), Wpg—more resources
- Brandon artist show
- Red tape in Brandon—controversy
- Art gallery
- Copyright—how to
- Storefront meeting place
- Workshops—how to start
- Brandon alliance with Wpg
- Form a committee—what needed

**Group 3**

- Funding—creating organizations, sites
- How to obtain—make proposals
- Contacts
- Ability to sell your product (marketing)
- Legalities—understanding them
- Advertising/networking—keeping up wth SM, consistency, having product available, loss of revenue

**Respondents via email:**

- I was wondering how we could access community research dollars. There are many grants available for research involving Aboriginal communities perhaps we could do this as research. This is just a thought but perhaps we can work on developing it further.
- What about advertising, could we expand on what we do with out journal. I will run this by Cathy.
- My goals—I want to be self sufficient enough to get off welfare, as for barriers, money. To get my work silk screened on to T-shirts.

**Question 6: What are your recommendations for future generation?**

**Group 1**

- Learn your languages
- Funding available? Where? Who?
- PR and Marketing

**Group 2**

- Afterschool programs
- Intergenerational opportunities
- Remove barriers—culture based criteria
- More autonomy in our work
- Develop cultural awareness for non-indigenous people, provide protocol for non-indigenous organizations
- Movement of indigenous education to ensure that policies are developed by our own people—ie: smudging protocol
- Create an Elders council for the arts,
- Move away from Government work and work more with businesses, open more doors away from institutions

**Group 3**

- We need more money
- Improve communication
- Celebrate our cultural institutions
- Facilitate support of all disciplines
- Teach in the classroom
- Embrace adjudication and share constructive criticism within respective disciplines

**Group 4**

- Resource app for cell phones
- Added to school curriculum
- Tours with artists into communities
- Festival of music/film/writers/crafts, etc
- More Indigenous exhibitions of the arts
- More cultural sensitivity/policies against appropriation
- Bring arts community to most poverty stricken areas, free events.
- Interactive computer programs
- To those in charge—say yes to all grants
- Frontline mentors, artists, experienced artists
- Grant writing workshops
- More funding for youth arts programs
- Empowering with knowledge and encouragement
- Incorporating more cultural traditions and land based programs
- Nature/medicinal teachings
- More access to sweats for impoverished neighbourhoods
- More artist events to share their art

**Develop cultural awareness for non-indigenous people.**

**Be brave! Don't quit,  
persistence pays off.**

**Group 5**

- Next generation: know where you come from
- Ask questions, where to go for people, money, skill building; you need communications skills, writing skills
- If I were in charge I would get society as a whole to recognize and honour our art as a legitimate way of making a living, a legitimate education tool within art/gender/culture/identity/healing and therapeutic tool; living is more than money
- Promoting accessibility, that there are open doors
- Get a mentor, the how of it, not western but more collaborative, personal compatibility
- More money! Like the euro socialist countries—more income
- Respect the treaties, resource sharing and self government

**Group 6**

- School provides base skills
- Allocate fund for in-house mentorship/promotion, ie: hand to mouth existence
- Advertise programs/opportunity directly to youth
- Money for staff (consistency and knowledge provides a good environment)
- Re-educate public about value and importance of art
- Local accessible residency (like Banff) and programming
- Transportable workshops and spaces
- Exchange programs for urban and rural/remote artists
- Utilize technology to educate and share and connect
- Expand “services” to meet needs
- Stable funding to support established and emerging artists (ie living and educations) on a national level
- “Be brave!” don't quit, persistence pays off.
- Train the trainer programs,—knowledge and retention and transfer

**Response via email:**

- I find at this point, I am ‘planting seeds’ for the future youth. I try to get into the communities, to talk/teach about our ‘ways’, and include sewing ie. Moss bags, cradleboards, star blankets. In the last year I have had the opportunity to visit 3 communities.

