

Successful Practices in British Columbia's Arts Community

Based on 14 interviews with leaders in the community

Prepared for



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Introduction and summary

Between June and October 2015, Kelly Hill (President of Hill Strategies Research) conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with senior artistic and administrative staff members at 14 arts organizations that have a record of success in three interrelated areas identified by the Alliance for Arts and Culture as priorities for British Columbia's arts sector:

- Human resources
- Community engagement and impacts
- Diversity

While these were the “official” topics of conversation, two other key topics clearly emerged during the conversations:

- The entrepreneurial nature of B.C. arts organizations
- The nature of success for different groups

The 14 interviewees were:

- Norman Armour, Managing Director, PuSh Festival, Vancouver
- Robert Barr, Executive Director, Okanagan Symphony, Kelowna
- Laura Byspalko, Managing Director, Indian Summer Festival, Vancouver
- Elaine Carol, Artistic Director, Miscellaneous Productions Society, Vancouver
- Ivan Habel, Executive Director, Belfry Theatre, Victoria
- Margo Kane, Artistic Managing Director, Full Circle Performance and Talking Stick Festival, Vancouver
- Heather Lindsay, General Manager, Intrepid Theatre, Victoria
- Helen Marzolf, Executive Director, Open Space Arts Society, Victoria
- Simone Orlando, Artistic Director and CEO, Ballet Kelowna, Kelowna
- Mannu Sandhu, Festival Director, Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival, Vancouver
- Lindy Sisson, Executive and Artistic Director, ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge
- Peter Thompson, Managing Director, Two Rivers Gallery, Prince George
- Marcus Youssef, Artistic Director, Newworld Theatre, Vancouver
- Mirna Zagar, Executive Director, The Dance Centre, Vancouver

Each of the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, based on a semi-structured interview protocol. Each interview had a main theme, but many covered multiple topics. Eleven interviews took place in person, while three were conducted over the phone.

This report provides a summary of key findings from the interviews. Regarding human resources, the interviews revealed that:

- Even with limited budgets, investing in human resources is crucial.
- All arts and culture organizations are short on human resources, even relatively well-financed ones. There is a risk of burnout, and many staff take on multiple roles.
- Funding for professional development is limited.
- Succession planning can be a challenge and should be built into a strategic plan.
- Mentorship efforts are important to the health of the arts in B.C., and there are some best practices in this area.
- Some human resource challenges can be related to structural decisions.

The interviews identified three key learnings concerning community engagement and impacts:

- Community engagement requires a thoughtful approach to get it right.
- Soliciting feedback is important.
- All arts organizations have significant impacts on people's lives, but these impacts vary between organizations.

B.C arts organizations work with and for a range of diverse individuals, groups, and communities. The interviews showed that there is a recognition of the need within the arts to reflect the interests and perspectives of all members of the community. Organizations have specifically designed programs for a wide range of people and perspectives, including youth, Indigenous people, economic and social diversity, mental and physical ability, cultural diversity, and geographic communities.

Regarding entrepreneurship in the arts, the interviews pointed to challenges and successes in business partnerships, the importance of productive collaborations, and the fact that funding is always a challenge.

What is success for the arts organizations interviewed? Many interviewees pointed to the art works that they have created, produced, and/or presented. Many others identified their ability to leave a legacy.

Note: This qualitative work is one component of a major research project on the situation of the arts and culture in the province, conducted by Hill Strategies for the Alliance for Arts and Culture with funding from the Vancouver Foundation.

Human resources

Human resource issues were identified in all of the 14 interviews. Four interviews focused specifically on human resources (including mentorship and succession planning):

- Ivan Habel, Executive Director, Belfry Theatre, Victoria
 - Ivan is the 2015 recipient of the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award for his efforts in mentoring arts administrators. The interview focused on mentorship.
- Lindy Sisson, Executive and Artistic Director, ACT Arts Centre, Maple Ridge
 - “The ACT Arts Centre serves as a gathering place for artists and community, a place where creativity is celebrated and nurtured. This downtown centre unites the many diverse aspects of these communities; providing a home for the rich history of local art, a showcase for first class entertainment and a superb facility for business development.” (quote from District of Maple Ridge website)
- Peter Thompson, Managing Director, Two Rivers Gallery, Prince George
 - At the time of the interview in October 2015, Peter was in the process of transitioning out of his position as the Managing Director of Two Rivers Gallery. The interview focused on succession planning.
- Mirna Zagar, Executive Director, The Dance Centre, Vancouver
 - The Dance Centre provides “innovative programs and services [in dance, including] presentation, outreach, audience development, and professional development. Mirna “finds the inspiration for her work in the role the arts play in changing society, bringing together diverse cultures, as well as the bridging and interaction of the art disciplines”. (quotes from Dance Centre website)

The key themes that emerged from these discussions are presented below.

Even with limited budgets, investing in human resources is crucial.

- The ACT Arts Centre has staff recognition as part of its value statement. According to Lindy Sisson, “investing time and energy in your staff pays off.... The happier staff are, the better job they do.” Investing in staff can lead to staff retention, increased staff capacity, and ultimately positive feedback from the community.
- Even though human resource management and mentorship take a fairly significant time investment (each approximately 1/8 of her time), Lindy Sisson warned “ignore H.R. at your own peril”. She attempts to empower her staff members. For example, each department within the arts centre has its own Strategic Plan. “People own their jobs.” It is also important for her to work with her staff members to figure out (and help them achieve) their career goals, even if that might not be with the arts centre.
- Mirna Zagar commented on the healthy state of human resources at The Dance Centre, noting that she hopes the many long-term staff members find the work to be rewarding despite the often long hours and other challenges the arts (and not-for-profit organizations in general) face. Mirna tries to build her staff around their skills, strengths,

and professional interests, more than their job descriptions. To make this work, she tries to recruit “visionaries with skills”. She also accepts that “different people will do the job in a different way”.

- Investing in long-term staff and succession planning are part of The Dance Centre’s strategic plan.
- Ballet Kelowna has recently achieved some human resource successes, in extending the contracted weeks per year and hours per week of its dancers as well as in hiring a full-time development and communications staff member.
- The Dance Centre supports the professional development of dance creators and performers via an artist-in-residence program and a DanceLab, which allows choreographers to collaborate with professionals in other disciplines. In the words of Mirna Zagar, “everything is geared to pushing the talent forward”.
- Lindy Sisson compares the salaries of her staff members to benchmarks provided by the national association in her area (CAPACOA) and develops strategies to increase salaries that are at below the national standards.

All arts and culture organizations are short on human resources, even relatively well-financed ones. There is a risk of burnout, and many staff take on multiple roles.

- Lindy Sisson mentioned that many people on staff have three or four jobs in their job description. Despite this fact, the ACT Arts Centre is trying to “break out of a poverty mentality” by investing in staff, while considering adding new staff in alignment with long term Strategic Plans.
- Elaine Carol commented on a “chicken-and-egg problem” with public funders, where the organization needs more staff to obtain and manage grants but, without the grants, cannot afford to hire the staff. She lamented the lack of a general manager in her organization, which has been in existence for 16 years.
- While the Indian Summer Festival does have year-round staff, Laura Byspalko noted that, given cash flow challenges, some staff have forgone some of their income during quieter months (but “catch up” when cash flow improves).
- Marcus Youssef noted that burnout is potentially an issue but having an Associate Artistic Director is very helpful in limiting the likelihood of burnout.
- Given the fact that she has “nowhere near enough money” for her projects, Margo Kane noted a significant lack of time (and a lack of colleagues doing similar work) to pursue all of her endeavours. Many people who train with her (as actors or administrators) will move on to projects elsewhere, given the lack of funding within her organization.
- Helen Marzolf noted that Open Space lacks the staff complement desired to engage as deeply as they would like with visitors.
- Intrepid Theatre has four staff members, all of whom are artists. With the significant partnerships that the organization has developed and many more that they would like to pursue, staffing levels are a limiting factor.

Funding for professional development is limited.

- Ivan Habel expressed a desire to have a consistent budget for professional development from year to year, but identified that as a significant challenge.
- Mirna Zagar noted that, with a limited budget, it is a challenge to invest appropriately in current staff so that they feel a sense of growth and development on an ongoing basis, not just when an occasional opportunity arises. She expressed a desire for more grants for professional development.

Succession planning can be a challenge and should be built into a strategic plan.

- Peter Thompson included succession planning as an integral part of Two Rivers Gallery's strategic plan. He noted that it is crucial to develop a plan that ensures that an organization can live on beyond the current CEO or ED.
- Ivan Habel noted that there is not enough support in the arts for junior managers, who could develop into senior management positions. Similarly, Lindy Sisson noted that there is "no money for middle management". The lack of junior or middle managers can lead to gaps in organizations' succession planning.
- While the two co-founders of the Indian Summer Festival are not looking to move on (and have not created a succession plan), at some point they do want to see the Festival thrive without themselves at the helm.

Mentorship efforts are important to the health of the arts in B.C., and there are some best practices in this area.

- Ivan Habel, a recent recipient of the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award for his efforts in mentoring arts administrators, calls mentorship "real hands-on work". He noted that there are several funding opportunities for mentorship initiatives and emphasized the importance of seeking them out.
- Ivan believes that mentorship is a gain for both mentor and mentee. He measures his success as a mentor by the success of his mentees, who have gone on to lead and manage other theatre companies across the country.
- Ivan's recommendations for mentorship best practices: for mentees – seek out specific funding opportunities; contact people you know and respect; and be up front about what you are seeking. For mentors – make sure you have the proper expertise and experience; make it known that you're open to offering advice and acting as a sounding board; and don't be afraid to be public about your contribution.
- Ivan noted that funding for mentorships is available from both the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Some human resource challenges can be related to structural decisions.

- Elaine Carol pointed out that emerging artists don't necessarily need to start an organization and can do a lot as individuals.
- In existence for five years, the Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival is entirely volunteer-run. The lack of continuity in the Festival's volunteer leadership has limited the festival's development. In 2014, VISAFF was held on one day rather than the typical three-day festival. In 2015, the Festival successfully returned to a three day event.
- Many arts organizations receive funding to hire staff on a temporary or internship basis. As noted by Ivan Habel, these temporary positions do not "miraculously" transition into self-sustaining, permanent positions.

Community engagement and impacts

Issues, successes, and challenges related to community engagement and impacts were noted in many of the 14 interviews. The five interviews that primarily focused on community engagement and impacts were with:

- Norman Armour, Managing Director, PuSh Festival, Vancouver
 - The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival takes place over 20 days in January and February each year, with the 12th edition taking place in 2016. The Festival aims to provide an “ambitious level of excellence, artistic innovation, and audience and community engagement” (quote from Festival website).
- Robert Barr, Executive Director, Okanagan Symphony, Kelowna
 - Okanagan Symphony has significant outreach and education activities in its home(s) in Kelowna, Penticton, and Vernon.
- Laura Byspalko, Managing Director, Indian Summer Festival, Vancouver
 - The vision of the Indian Summer Festival is for “an inclusive, diverse, and culturally-rich society”. Their mission is “to offer daring, multi-arts events that catalyze and inspire audiences and artists in a spirit of dialogue and global citizenship”. (quotes from Indian Summer Festival’s 2015 Annual Report)
- Elaine Carol, Artistic Director, MISCELLANEOUS Productions Society, Vancouver.
 - MISCELLANEOUS Productions works with culturally- diverse, socially-diverse, multi-barriered, and mainstream youth to make performances, new media, and music for presentation to the public using an “interdisciplinary, community-engaged” approach to cultivate and maintain “long-term relationships with the communities [they] work with”. “Accessibility and inclusion [are] central pillars of the company’s mandate.” (quotes from MISCELLANEOUS Productions website)
- Simone Orlando, Artistic Director and CEO, Ballet Kelowna, Kelowna
 - The interview focused on the Ballet’s partnership with the local boys and girls club to involve at-risk youth in a “for youth by youth” creation. The project involves letting the children decide what important social issues will be addressed in a dance creation.

Community engagement requires a thoughtful approach to get it right.

- Peter Thompson noted that community engagement can be threatening to traditional galleries that are focused on the primacy of expert knowledge about great works of art. However, “art experts are not the only ones with significant knowledge about creativity”. At Two Rivers Gallery, they try to understand what it is about art and artists that might be important to other segments of the Prince George community. In the view of Peter Thompson, “the arts are fundamentally about how to take risk in the pursuit of meaning”.
- Simone Orlando, who is fairly new in her position at Ballet Kelowna, indicated that she is working to understand the Okanagan community and find the best ways to connect. In developing a new studio space, she is trying to get people to engage with the organization by “revealing what we do on a daily basis”. The organization is working on “friend raising” to help ensure its continued well-being.
- Robert Barr commented that the relationship-building process takes a lot of work, including developing personal connections, more robust communications, and communications tracking, all of which can help to build trust and an attachment to the organization.
- The Okanagan Symphony has extensive outreach and education activities (e.g., school concerts, master classes, incorporating youth performers, library performances), which are done for education and outreach purposes, not simply audience building. In the words of Robert Barr, this can help “build passion for the artform” and create a foundation on which to build.
- Helen Marzolf indicated that Open Space produces challenging events and programs intended to connect with visitors and participating groups. Still, there is a challenge getting the word out, as the local media’s coverage of the contemporary arts is limited.

Soliciting feedback is important.

- MISCELLANEOUS Productions has commissioned strong evaluation reports in an effort to document its impacts on youth (who often have multiple barriers and challenges) beyond anecdotal information. They have also produced documentary films about their productions.
- Ballet Kelowna mentioned they frequently conduct surveys of their audience.
- Laura Byspalko noted that soliciting feedback helps the festival learn what diverse audiences are seeking. The Indian Summer Festival has surveyed audiences since the beginning of the Festival in 2011, with on-site, volunteer-implemented surveys. This assists the festival in collecting the broadest possible information from a diverse audience.

- “Who are our audiences?” is a frequent question posed by staff at the Indian Summer Festival. The Festival’s audience surveys allowed them to develop four profiles of typical audience members that provide a “quick reference guide” for many key decisions of the Festival.
 - “Cultural connectors” are young, multi-ethnic people who are active on social media and engaged in the arts. “Discerning intellectuals” are particularly interested in high-quality content and discussions. “Business insiders”, high net-worth individuals, “relish the opportunity to network with peers and entertain clients” while enjoying one-of-a-kind experiences. “Trailblazing tastemakers” are often young South Asian professionals who may “value the festival as an opportunity for cultural reconnection”.
- Many other organizations interviewed have not conducted surveys. Pursuing structured feedback can be challenging and (sometimes) expensive.

All arts organizations have significant impacts on people’s lives, but these impacts vary between organizations.

- Ballet Kelowna’s partnership with the local boys and girls club engages at-risk youth in a positive activity, thereby helping to prevent social isolation and possibly crime for at-risk youth.
- There can be significant cost savings related to investing in arts organizations focused on at-risk youth. On a yearly basis for each youth, Elaine Carol estimated that taxpayers’ cost to work with MISCELLANEOUS Productions is about \$13,000, while social services amount to \$52,000 and the criminal justice system can cost over \$125,000.
- Informal feedback regarding the Okanagan Symphony’s education and outreach efforts have been positive, with comments such as “you changed my life” and “you helped me discover who I am”.
- One of the impacts desired by the Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival is getting South Asian film talent (of all kinds) into the mainstream.
- Two Rivers Gallery has taken a unique step for an art gallery: reconfiguring their gallery and creating a maker’s space to be more relevant to the community and a home for creativity of all sorts.

Diversity

The five interviews that focused specifically on diversity were conducted with:

- Margo Kane, Artistic Managing Director, Full Circle Performance and Talking Stick Festival, Vancouver
 - Full Circle First Nations Performance “honours the contributions of all our members within a diverse circle of cultures, communities and perspectives; we initiate projects and bring them to completion; we renew traditional practices to allow for our continuation through time.” As their name connotes, Full Circle involves “inclusiveness, wholeness, a full gathering. It is both a traditional symbol of completion and of continuous movement – action with no beginning or end.” (quotes from Full Circle’s website)
- Heather Lindsay, General Manager, Intrepid Theatre, Victoria
 - Often thought of as the organization that runs the Victoria Fringe Festival, Intrepid Theatre actually produces a range of festivals, runs two small downtown theatre venues, and presents a year-round series.
- Helen Marzolf, Executive Director, Open Space Arts Society, Victoria
 - As “a working laboratory for innovative art practices”, Open Space is an artist-run centre that presents the work of contemporary artists and attempts to be inclusive of all (quote from Open Space Vision Statement). In particular, Open Space has done significant work with Indigenous artists.
- Mannu Sandhu, Festival Director, Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival, Vancouver
 - The Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival (or VISAFF) attempts to “bridge the gap between South Asian talent and mainstream audiences” and “serve as a launching pad for integration through celebration and education” (quotes from VISAFF Facebook page).
- Marcus Youssef, Artistic Director, Newworld Theatre, Vancouver.
 - The interview focused on the collaborative model employed by Newworld Theatre as well as the organization’s engagement with issues of importance to the community. As noted on their website, “every Newworld project must in some way have the courage to grapple with some aspect of morality or ethics”.

B.C arts organizations work with and for a range of diverse individuals, groups, and communities. The interviews showed that there is a recognition of the need within the arts to reflect the interests and perspectives of all members of the community. Organizations have specifically designed programs for a wide range of people and perspectives, including youth, Indigenous people, economic and social diversity, mental and physical ability, cultural diversity, and geographic communities.

- Elaine Carol’s productions integrate youth from many different backgrounds, including culturally diverse, socially diverse, and youth with multiple barriers. During the

interview, she estimated that 35% of the youth with whom she works are Indigenous. Elaine also noted that some elitist artists consider art rooted in identity and community as journalism rather than art.

- One of many partnerships of Full Circle Performance is with the Urban Native Youth Association. The Association's "overly creative minds" group provides workshops and gives youth an opportunity to perform.
- Open Space works closely with Indigenous artists to invite a more inclusive expression of the contemporary arts. Peter Morin's artist residency was transformative and reoriented Open Space towards Indigenous ways of knowing. Open Space and the Indigenous curators/artists who work with the organization have successfully applied for special project funding to help develop relationships with Indigenous artists and communities (e.g., Indigenous Youth Arts Program). Open Space also recognizes a responsibility to plan and deliver programming beyond the walls of the gallery or concert space.
- Intrepid Theatre attempts to promote accessibility in multiple ways, including diversity of incomes, cultural backgrounds, and (dis)abilities.
- Laura Byspalko noted that the Indian Summer Festival serves "people of many different ethnicities, incomes, and locations". Their programming, communications, and design decisions all take these diversities into account.
- The Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival (VISAFF), over the past five years, has attempted to promote South Asian culture within Vancouver's mainstream. The works presented are drawn from the South Asian diaspora, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mannu Sandhu estimates that about 75% of their audience members are of South Asian origin.
- For Margo Kane, Aboriginal people are the "first audience" for her works. An important challenge is the fact that many Aboriginal people are not as experienced in visiting theatre venues and may feel less comfortable in that environment. Cost is also an issue for many. Obviously, many non-Aboriginal people also attend her productions. However, Margo noted that many non-Aboriginal people are not adventurous enough and do not wish to challenge themselves with new and unknown works that were created from an Aboriginal perspective. Similarly, many non-Aboriginal presenters and funders do not have a history of working with Aboriginal people. Margo is actively helping to develop an Indigenous presenters' network.
- Margo Kane works with the Vancouver School Board's Aboriginal Enhancement Program to provide workshops and performances in Vancouver schools.
- Marcus Youssef noted that Newworld Theatre's responsive programming model has helped them explore concepts of inclusion and broaden perceptions of diversity, in particular through a collaboration with an actor with Down Syndrome.
- Elaine Carol pointed out that some female-led organizations and Western-based organizations face stronger funding challenges.
- As noted on Newworld Theatre's website, "it is not the voice of the big or powerful or corporate that ultimately matter; it's the stories of the people around us, in our multiple communities and neighbourhoods, however we might define them."

- Both Kelowna-based organizations interviewed for this project indicated that even the notion of a geographic community can be complex. There are challenges connecting with the different Okanagan communities, including Kelowna, Vernon, and Penticton. In addition, there can be a perception locally that arts organizations are amateur-based rather than professional.
- “We are rooted in the local” but have found broader markets “as our artistic successes have been recognized” (Marcus Youssef, Newworld Theatre). A key challenge in this context is balancing local and international activities.
- Ballet Kelowna has a long history of touring throughout Western Canada and beyond, and is now looking to engage more deeply with residents in its Okanagan home.

Entrepreneurship in the arts

While not a designated topic of conversation, the entrepreneurship of B.C. arts organizations became clear through the interviews. Typically, artists will see an unfilled niche in their community(ies) and attempt to create activities (and possibly a formal organization) that will fill that need. Specific examples of entrepreneurial activities from the qualitative interviews include:

- Norman Armour realized that Vancouver lacked a curated international festival of the arts that would help create context and a sense of community. The PuSh Festival was created to fill that niche.
- Intrepid Theatre looks for gaps in arts activities on Vancouver Island and tries to fill those gaps. For example, they have partnered with others to produce a queer-based Christmas cabaret. Intrepid tries to “invest in what’s next” with the approach of taking big artistic risks but not huge financial risks.

The interviews with Norman Armour and Marcus Youssef (ostensibly related to community engagement and diversity) covered topics related to entrepreneurship more than any other area.

Marcus Youssef succinctly summarized the situation: “we are entrepreneurial as hell”.

Business partnerships: challenges and successes

- With a lack of head offices, even in the largest cities in B.C., many interviewees cited the challenges of raising money from businesses. In fact, almost every interviewee identified business sponsorship as a challenge.
- Some organizations have been creative in developing relationships with smaller-scale businesses, such as microbreweries. With a scale that is similar to many arts organizations, smaller businesses can be a more natural fit for arts partnerships.
- Similarly, the notion of “start-up” is common between the arts and small businesses, especially in Vancouver, where there are many business start-ups. The question posed by Norman Armour was whether Vancouver, a city known as a place of innovation in for-profit businesses, can also be recognized as a place of innovation among not-for-profit organizations.
- With marketing as an important challenge, Intrepid Theatre has developed in-kind and cash partners, some of which have “great marketing reach” in the community. Still, business funding and partnerships are a significant challenge for the organization.
- As noted by Norman Armour, it is often necessary to “create the proper conditions and frame of thinking to get support”, whether that is from businesses, individuals, or governments.

- The Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival receives no government funding but relies on partnerships and sponsorships. Personal relationships (and trust) have been key in developing these partnerships.

Collaboration is vital and takes many forms.

- Collaboration can take a lot of work, but productive partnerships can help organizations do more without significant expenses.
- Some organizations, like Newworld Theatre, have embedded the ethic and practice of collaboration as a central tenet of their work. Simply put, “we can make more happen through partnerships” (Marcus Youssef).
- MISCELLANEOUS Productions has partnerships with many different organizations and approaches them without a “sense of entitlement”.
- Open Space has developed partnerships with many other organizations, businesses, and social service groups.
- Ballet Kelowna partners with a local boys and girls club to engage at-risk youth, and lets participants decide what social issues are addressed in the youth-created dance projects.
- In 2015, about one-half of the PuSh Festival’s presentations were collaborations.
- Margo Kane works with many community organizations to draw Aboriginal people to her works (and the venues in which the works are presented). In addition, she creates works in neighbourhoods as a result of community partnerships.
- At Two Rivers Gallery, Peter Thompson found ways to make their “pretty building” into a well-used community asset. This helped him make alliances in the community, including Startup Prince George, which recognized the connection between business entrepreneurship and creativity.
- Several organizations made the point that collaboration may help to open up new markets and funding possibilities. For example, Marcus Youssef noted that, by being responsive in their work to issues important to the community, Newworld Theatre has broadened their audiences and appealed to more diverse members of the community.
- The Indian Summer Festival has mutually beneficial partnerships with many organizations that are seeking to expand their reach within the South Asian community, including the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Banff Centre, Vancouver Writers’ Fest, and Surrey Art Gallery. These partnerships have developed in many different ways.
- Marcus Youssef provided tips for potential collaborators: Communication skills are key. Allow for difference, not dominance. Act from a place of authenticity. Always interrogate “why”. Act with transparency and openness.

Funding is always a challenge.

- Heather Lindsay of Intrepid Theatre noted that marketing funding is hard to come by, and that they have to continue to grow the marketing budget to reach diverse audiences.
- Elaine Carol noted that, due to funding silos, funding is a huge issue when working with at-risk youth. There is strong competition for funding, and reporting requirements are onerous. Elaine estimated that MISCELLANEOUS Productions applies for 50-70 grants each year.
- Norman Armour at the PuSh Festival pointed out the importance of word-of-mouth marketing to spread the word about the festival.
- Margo Kane argued that many funders don't always understand Aboriginal arts projects, have little to no experience dealing with Aboriginal people, and have much more of a mainstream focus. Kane has partnered with the Vancouver school board, UBC First Nations House of Learning and other groups for several initiatives, but also pointed out that there is not nearly enough money for the projects in which she is involved.
- Helen Marzolf pointed out that funding is a challenge for Open Space, particularly for major capital projects and cultural infrastructure.
- Heather Lindsay noted that venue space in Victoria is a constant challenge for their large festivals that require more than one or two mid sized theatres.
- Margo Kane finds it challenging, with just a part-time staff person responsible for partnerships, to raise money for all of the partnerships in which she is active.
- Even though it is challenging to raise funds from government sources, Intrepid Theatre tries to promote a "can-do" attitude, attempting to engage their community (and develop partnerships) to create events that will fill a niche in Victoria.

What is success?

While the nature of success was not a specific topic of conversation, a number of discussions highlighted how the organizations themselves perceive success.

Sometimes success can be measured simply. For example, Intrepid Theatre has many full-attendance events. Other successes are more qualitative, in having volunteers return for ten years or more, or by ensuring accessibility to individuals with diverse challenges.

Art works created / produced / presented

- It was clear from the discussions that the organizations are very proud of their artistic accomplishments. As noted by Marcus Youssef, their core success is their role in their sector, highlighted by the work that they do / create / present. They “tell stories that matter in different ways”.
- Works that have a long “afterlife” (i.e., remain with attendees) were noted as goals of Open Space and the PuSh Festival. Presenting meaningful works is key. For the PuSh Festival, an indicator of success in this area is the fact that as many as 50% of audience members stay for post-presentation talkback sessions.
- Many works presented by organizations interviewed for this report wrestle with important issues, be they social, personal, political, tragic, inspirational, etc. Making people think is key.
- For Margo Kane, engaging deeply with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is of primary importance. “Theatre is about holding up a mirror to (and challenging) society”.

Leaving a legacy

- A number of interviewees spoke – in many different ways – of the importance of leaving a legacy, whether that be in terms of ensuring the “long-term viability of the practice”, “changing the way the city views arts and culture”, or “encouraging the next generation” (quotes from Marcus Youssef).
- In some cases, this desire was expressed in terms of leaving an organization in a good place through timely and effective succession planning (as noted by Peter Thompson, Two Rivers Gallery).
- Many arts organizations, including Open Space, the PuSh Festival, and the Indian Summer Festival, are trying to be a space for conversation, for reflection, and for lasting impact on people’s lives. Open Space tries to “choreograph lots of opportunities for conversation”. As noted by Helen Marzolf, “engaging deeply is so important”.
- Much of Margo Kane’s art practice is tied to Aboriginal identity and, ultimately, the survival of her community. As she noted, she often pursues “stories about who we are and how we are connected to the land”.