

Equity Committee Public Update #2

This report summarizes the activities of the Equity Committee since February 24, 2021.

Community Engagement

The AGA Equity Committee has prioritized engaging with community members over the past year. This consultation initiative took the form of a series of online roundtables, four of which took place in 2021. These roundtables are intended as one step in the AGA's journey to recognize and address inequities within our organization and within the visual arts and museum sectors more broadly and particularly to engage with those who have been historically marginalized in society. The AGA received an Alberta Museums Association Institutional Grant to help fund the Equity Committee's Community Roundtable series. These funds were used to contract an external facilitator, provide honoraria for roundtable participants and an Indigenous Elder, and to cover costs associated with barrier-free access such as translation services and family care.

Facilitated by the Colbourne Institute for Inclusive Leadership (Norquest College), these conversations were centred around the "Circle of Trust" model for creating a safe and trustworthy environment. (This approach was developed by the Center for Courage & Renewal, and you can read more about it on their website: couragerenewal.org). The conversations were structured around three questions about each person's and/or organization's experiences with the AGA; what an inclusive and equitable relationship can and should look like; challenges to participation and recommendations for moving forward. These sessions took place on Zoom and included participants from across Alberta, including: Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche and Lethbridge. Participants represented artists, galleries, artist-run-centres, art councils and non-profit organizations serving disabled artists, the Two Spirit community, and IBPOC artists, youth and culture workers.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who participated in our roundtable conversations. Thank you for the time and labour you offered to be in dialogue with us, sharing your experiences, criticisms, feedback and recommendations. Some of the common themes that arose in these discussions that will shape the Equity Committee's future work, include:

- Reducing barriers for community organizations to utilize the AGA's space or otherwise partner with the AGA
- The AGA's relationship with the neighbourhood in which it is situated
- Relationships with newcomer and immigrant communities and resources in languages other than English
- Community outreach to rural areas and thinking beyond the internet
- Reducing barriers in exhibition open calls and other application processes
- Involvement of Elders and knowledge keepers in the AGA's work
- Use of plain language in communications
- Support for emerging and early-career artists and community groups
- Access to the AGA collection and archives

Strategic Planning

Throughout 2021, AGA staff and the Board of Directors worked with a facilitator from the Province of Alberta's Community Development Unit to develop a new 3-year strategic plan. Building upon the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, the AGA continues to structure its planning around 4-Pillars and Priorities—Create, Engage, Innovate and Sustain—with Inclusivity now at the core to underscore and connect each pillar. This new Strategic Plan includes many of the recommendations that came out of the 2020-2021 Community Roundtables. Some of the specific goals related to EDI include:

- Continuing EDI training for all staff
- Creating a more accessible website
- Working with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers
- Expanding free admission opportunities
- Providing accessible space for community organizations
- Conducting an accessibility audit
- Developing new ways to connect with senior audiences
- Creating thoughtful / caring contractual agreements and processes
- De-gendering and de-colonizing language
- Developing a mentorship program for young artists/curators
- Creating resources to support new immigrant artists

The Equity Committee recently created three working groups to address primary goals for 2022 that include: Staff and Board Training; Accessibility; and Community Outreach.

Community Outreach

The Community Outreach working group is currently working on the next community consultation roundtable, which will take place in June and be focussed on art educators in Alberta. We will also be developing other roundtables throughout the year and follow-up to ensure accountability with previous roundtable participants. The Equity Committee has prepared a public questionnaire related to the history and future of the *Alberta Biennial* exhibition that will be released online on June 1. Everyone is invited to contribute their thoughts to this survey.

Staff Training

Over the summer of 2021, all AGA staff participated in Norquest College's diversity and inclusion course called "Inclusion at Work." This was a self-paced, online course that offered practical inclusion skills through five modules. The Staff Training working group is scheduling a second all staff training session in June in collaboration with Voice of Albertans with Disabilities - Disability Awareness program. We are currently researching additional training resources related to anti-racism and situational de-escalation, among other topics.

Accessibility

Several accessibility initiatives were undertaken over the last year. Every exhibition now includes large format labels near the exhibition entrance. These are provided with a map so viewers can easily locate the label as they move through the exhibition.

We are in the process of constructing portable stools hangers for all floors of the Gallery so that visitors can access portable stools as they move throughout the building. We are currently looking into acquiring a larger variety of portable seating options, with augmented seats and weight capacities.

A full equity audit has been scheduled to be undertaken in summer 2022, results of that will be provided in the next committee update.

Other Initiatives

The AGA has created four All Gender Washrooms with new signage. Two washrooms are on the lower level, in the Ledcor Theatre Lobby and two are single-stall washrooms in May restaurant (open only during restaurant hours).

We have replaced all employee nametags to include their gender pronouns, at the employee's discretion. This will now be a part of regular on-boarding with all new staff.

We have updated our Naloxone kits and trained all security staff on their use. We have also added two kits and a needle disposal container at our off-site Collection Services Facility.

Please check back for regular updates from the AGA's Equity Committee. If you have any questions or would like to share your own experiences and/or ideas, please contact info@youraga.ca.