

WEBINAR SUMMARY

PUBLIC ARTS EQUITY IN ACTION

Thursday, February 22nd, 2024

“How can access to the arts and culture sector from coast to coast to coast be more equitable? And how can participatory methods be used to engage more community members in the move toward more equitable cultural spaces?”

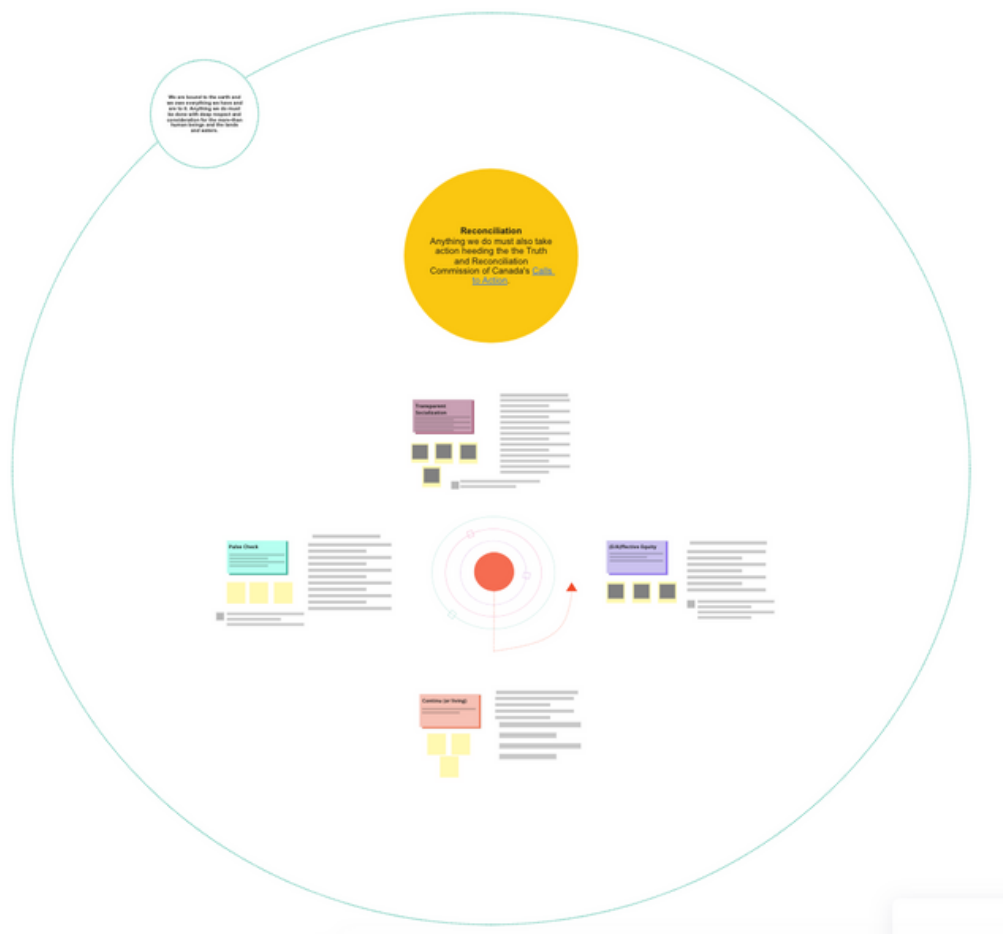
Shanice Bernicky, a PhD student and Resident Researcher, in consultation with equity-seeking cultural workers, developed “Spiralling Outwardly for Equity in Public Arts” – a Framework designed to assist public arts organizations develop equitable practices for employees and community members, and encourage a continual commitment to equity work.

In this webinar, Shanice, joined by project contributor and Community Consultant and Educator Annalissa Crisostomo, shared actionable steps, participatory methods, and practical strategies to advance equity in arts and culture spaces.

The following summary provides key takeaways from the session. Access a transcript of the presentation and accompanying slides at culturedays.ca/resources/webinars

Overview of the Project and Framework

- As a resident researcher for Mass Culture, an art support organization, Shanice developed the Framework “Spiralling Outwardly for Equity in Public Arts”. This framework, looking to challenge trends where equity is an afterthought in EDI plans, searches for a way forward by harnessing the artistic license of the arts and culture sector.
- The construction of this Framework as a spiral, enveloped by the Earth and watched over by the sun, acknowledges that a timeless approach to equity work is needed. Seeing this type of work as a process ensures that we continue to build, adapt, shift, and review over and over again.



Still from Framework “Spiralling Outwardly for Equity in Public Arts”
Courtesy of Shanice Bernicky

Maker-Space Gatherings

- As project contributors, equity-seeking cultural workers and researchers, gathered to make together while exploring a common theme. These participatory discussions called ‘Maker-Space Gatherings’, encourage a soothing and inclusive atmosphere where participants feel more comfortable reflecting on their perceptions of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The approaches in these gatherings focused on:

1. Prompting reflection through colour, texture, sound & shape.

2. Attempting to overcome painful memories.

3. Engaging in laughter and communal care by world-building.

- Inviting engagement through creative prompts and exercises can ignite creative critical thinking and stimulate dialogue.
- These gatherings expanded into discussions of the realities public arts organizations face and how that can affect equity-centered work.
- Bringing to the conversations the realities of lack of stable funding, municipal and federal barriers to fully accessible spaces, and the tokenizing of equity-seeking staff and community, we can then engage in respectful and caring explorations to world-build together.

Putting the Framework into Action

How can I adopt a community approach to equitable practices in my organization and/or community?

- By building trust and role-modeling vulnerability.
- Create anonymous methods for employees to provide feedback regarding barriers they experience to bring their whole selves to work.
- Create anonymous methods for community members/artists to provide feedback regarding barriers they experience attempting to engage with your organization.
- Appoint a permanent liaison from the community and compensate them for their work. If you are holding consultations, allow the liaison to lead them.
- Small arts and culture organizations struggle to receive funding for such initiatives. This is a structural issue. Collaborate across sectors (such as public health or education) to apply for grants to take the step above if you can.
- Encourage the board of directors of your organization to make space for seats reserved for one artist from an equity-seeking background and one community member with an equity-seeking background with no prior experience required.

Equity in Practice Guided by the Framework and Experience

What does it mean to honour and acknowledge time, knowledge, and energy?

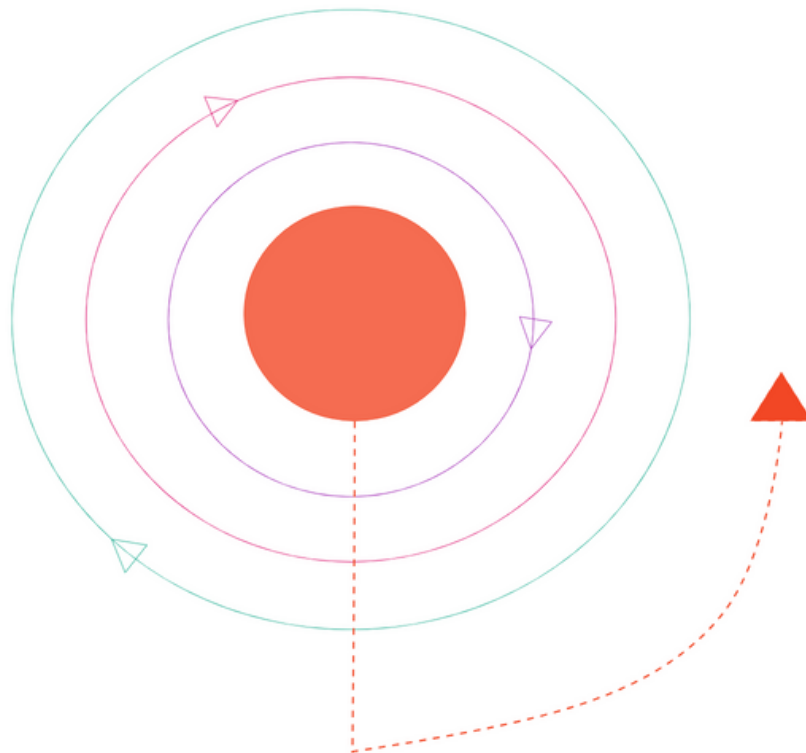
- Formally recognize and name your lineages of work (with consent) from employees or community members contributing to equity work and treat them as equal collaborators.
- Challenge dominant perspectives about who is an “expert”.
- Engage with a diverse group of community arts practitioners.
- Recognize the limitations and precariousness of arts work and funding, and that additional funding or monetary compensation for workers is not always possible. If that is the case, negotiate other ways to recognize the labour such as paid days off, leaving work early, etc.
- Consider your own knowledge, power, and position to support the personal and professional growth of individuals, according to what THEY identify as meaningful.
- Advocate with and/or on behalf of peers, participants, and community members doing the work. Leveraging your power and position at interpersonal and systemic levels as well. Be persistent in the pursuit of actionable change.
- Honour experience and emotions as sources of knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Ask the hard questions, be accountable, master the apology when called in/out.

“As community arts practitioners, you can leverage your creative strengths and bring them into [Equity] work.”

—Annalissa Crisostomo

Navigate the Public Framework [“Spiralling Outwardly for Equity in Public Arts”](#) in the miro board and access more resources, and approaches to continue building timeless approaches to equity work in your community.

Visit miro.com/tinyurl to access the Framework and add your contributions.



Still from Framework “Spiralling Outwardly for Equity in Public Arts”
Courtesy of Shanice Bernicky

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