
Highlights

INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

› **Lack of recognition of the primary founding aspect of Indigenous culture in Montreal**

Indigenous visual art artists suffer from a lack of recognition and a certain indifference towards Indigenous culture. This lack of recognition is revealed by the almost complete lack of public works by Indigenous artists, even though the City of Montreal (Tiohtiá:ke) is located on unceded Mohawk (kanien'kehá:ka) land.

› **Great disparity in artistic trajectories**

The small handful of Indigenous artists who regularly exhibit their work in the major institutions of Montreal's contemporary art world tends to obscure the fact that most Indigenous artists living and working in Montreal have a hard time achieving recognition

for their work. Furthermore, most of these artists who are recognized by the institutions live outside of Québec.

› **Inadequacy of the current status of “professional visual arts artist” where Indigenous realities are concerned**

The current status of professional visual art artists, different from that of professional arts and crafts artists, seems poorly suited to Indigenous realities. Furthermore, the essential condition for acquiring the status of professional artist, namely “peer recognition,” is particularly problematic since the mostly non-Indigenous artists who make up the visual arts juries are poorly informed about Indigenous realities and artistic knowledge.

CULTURALLY DIVERSE ARTISTS

› **Blatant under-representation**

Even though 33% of Montreal's inhabitants are from diverse communities, only 13% of the artists whose work is exhibited in Montreal are from such communities.

› **More precarious financial situation**

The average annual income of artists in the visual arts from diverse communities is 28% lower than that of other artists.

› **Difficulty having one's experience and skills as a professional artist recognized**

Artists from diverse communities have a hard time getting recognition for their career in their country of origin and the specific nature of their approach, which is often halfway between the visual arts and arts and crafts, contemporary art and traditional culture. The difficulty of acquiring recognition as professional artists makes it much more improbable, if not impossible, for them to gain access to creative grants and public art competitions.

Fifteen recommendations

The great majority of artists we met told us that, in one way or another, the ideal would be for funding agencies and disseminators to adapt to their reality, rather than the other way around. That is why we have chosen to emphasize recommendations that are aimed primarily at public organizations and that might lead to the development of concrete measures.

INDIGENOUS AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE ARTISTS: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote the recognition of culturally diverse and Indigenous artists among professional associations (RAAV, CARFAC, CMAQ, CQAM...).
2. Look at ways of getting beyond the scission between the professional status of artists in the visual arts and that of artists in arts and crafts.
3. Adapt the procedures for applying to the various competitions for artists (programs and residencies) by such means as video presentations.
4. Promote support and mentorship programs for artists from diverse and Indigenous communities.
5. Develop internships for artists from diverse and Indigenous communities within cultural organizations and institutions along the lines of the DémART-Mtl program.
6. Require the representation of artists from diverse and Indigenous communities among the decision-making bodies within arts organizations and institutions.

INDIGENOUS ARTISTS: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Make the Indigenous arts, in all their variety, a central and founding component of Montreal's artistic identity.
8. Create a Prize for Indigenous artists.
9. Think about a public commission policy specifically for Indigenous artists in order to better identify the territory of Montreal as an Indigenous territory.
10. Take into account all Indigenous artists living and working in Montreal, including artists from Métis communities and Indigenous artists from other countries.
11. Establish more systematic ties with artists from the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) communities from Kahnawá:ke, Kanehsatà:ke and Akwesasne.
12. Continue consultations about the notion of "peers" in an Indigenous context in order to find a satisfactory balance between recognition by the community and recognition by the visual arts community, and thus promote self-determination within traditional and contemporary artistic practices.

CULTURALLY DIVERSE ARTISTS: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Create a prize for diversity in the visual arts, along the lines of the prize for diversity and music and the prize for cultural diversity in dance given by the Conseil des arts de Montréal, designed specifically for artists in mid-career. An exhibition within a major museum institution could be organized to present the finalists from the competition so as to increase impact.
14. Raise awareness of programs to support artists among employment centres and community organizations.
15. Create a data bank identifying within Montreal's artistic community at least two resource persons for each major geographic and cultural area in the world, who can evaluate the career of immigrant artists in their country of origin. Such resource persons could be consulted by the various disseminators, organizations and professional associations.