

WHAT

WE

HEARD

REPORT

CRD

2021 Arts Champions Summit

REFRAMING
OUR ARTS FUTURE



Contents

Summary 3

What we've done and what is next 3

About the Summit 3

Acknowledgements 3

Background 4

Summit Objectives 4

Planning considerations 5

Conditions continued to call for different methods of engagement. 5

As accessible as possible 5

Looking outward, but remaining focused on the region 5

Registrants and attendance 5

Attendance and Turnout 5

Summit Activities 6

Part 1: Welcomes and Arts Organizer PechaKuchas 6

Part 2: Interview with Jesse Wentz, Canada Council Chair and Co-Executive Director of the Indigenous Screen Office 8

Part 3: Panel & Breakout rooms 9

Post-Summit Survey 9

What we heard 10

Theme 1: Sharing power & developing trust-based partnerships 10

Theme 2: Space as the limiting factor 11

Theme 3: Accountability and urgency 11

Theme 4: Remove systemic barriers from funding 12

Theme 5: Value and desire for CRD Funding 12

Taking action 13





Summary

What we've done and what is next

In December 2021, the Capital Regional District Arts and Culture Support Service (CRD Arts & Culture) convened the third Arts Champions Summit: Reframing the Arts. The event was held online, free to attend, and open to the public. Sessions were centred on the development of a more equitable arts region and included presentations, an interview with the Chair of Canada Council for the Arts, a panel, and ended with facilitated breakout sessions. The event drew 110 attendees from across the region and beyond.

Key themes that emerged from the Summit and a post-summit survey included sharing power and developing trust-based partnerships, space as a limiting factor, accountability and urgency, removing systemic barriers from all funding, and the value and desire of funding. Videos of sessions are available through the CRD YouTube channel.

CRD Arts & Culture will continue to implement an EDI Lens through an approved Implementation Framework, which will be informed by feedback gathered through the Summit as well as future engagement with the arts sector.

About the Summit

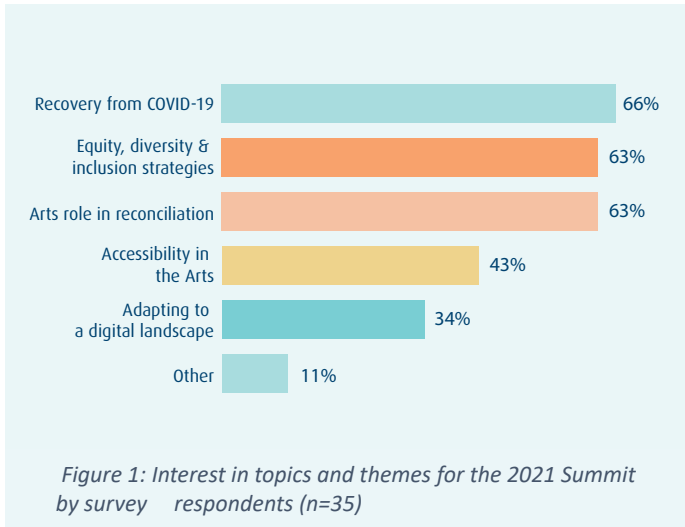
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that the offices of CRD Arts & Culture are on the Traditional Territory of the **Ləkʷəŋən** peoples, and recognize and respect the First Nations governments across this region — the **Ləkʷəŋən** (Songhees) and **Xwsepsum** (Esquimalt) Nations, the **WSÁNEĆ** Nations, including **WJOLELP** (Tsartlip), **BOKÉCEN** (Pauquachin), **SʔÁUTW**, (Tsawout) **WSIKEM** (Tseycum) out on the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands, to the west **Sc'ianew** (Beecher Bay), **T'Sou-ke**, and **Pacheedaht**, and **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat) and **Pune'laxutth'** (Penelekut) Nations, all of whom have lived on these lands since time immemorial. We are committed to respectfully and appropriately engaging in regional arts and culture strategies, decision-making and shared interests, recognizing that the attitudes, policies and institutions of colonization have changed Indigenous peoples' longstanding relationships with their artistic and cultural practices.

We thank Songhees Nation and Cecelia Dick for providing a Traditional Welcome for the Arts Champions Summit. We relied on the guidance of arts sector consultant Kenji Maeda, whose knowledge about accessible event creation, theme development and effective community engagement were crucial in the development of this event. We acknowledge and are grateful for all speakers and participants for sharing their experience for the benefit of the region and arts community, as well as Leya Tess, whose artwork is distributed throughout this report. We also acknowledge and thank Canada Council for the Arts for their support with this event.

Background

The functions of CRD Arts & Culture's Support Service are to support, promote and celebrate the arts on behalf of participating municipalities in the capital region, with one of the services provided being the organization of a biennial Arts Champions Summit. The intention of this event is to provide an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments of the regional art community, while convening to discuss issues of relevance. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting public health restrictions, the 2020 Arts Champions Summit was delayed to 2021 and moved online.



Theme development

The broad theme of equity was based on two developments – the first being the direction from the Arts Commission to develop an ‘equity lens’ on CRD Arts & Culture operations and granting, leading to the development of an Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) subcommittee charged with applying this equity lens and providing recommendations to the Arts Commission.

The second development was the result from a survey sent to the regional arts community, requesting input into topics and themes for the summit (Figure 1). Of the 35 respondents, 63% (22) expressed interest in ‘equity, diversity and inclusion’ strategies as well as arts role in reconciliation, while 43% (15) were interested in ‘accessibility in the arts.’ Of the four respondents who answered other, topics of interest included ‘Discrimination by gender and race,’ ‘Operating funding for arts facilities,’ ‘Arts role in climate / environment crises,’ and ‘Community Cultural Development (using the arts).’

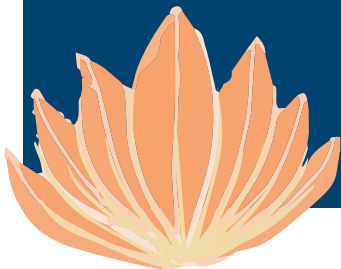


Summit Objectives

In alignment with these developments, the objectives of the 2021 Arts Champions Summit were established:

To develop a deeper and broader community understanding of the future of equity in the region's arts.

To seek input from marginalized communities, as well as the broader regional arts ecosystem, in order to inform the AAC's EDI subcommittee work on developing an equity lens on granting and operations.



Planning considerations

Conditions continued to call for different methods of engagement.

With ongoing uncertainty around the COVID pandemic and related public health measures, and considering accessibility as paramount, the 2021 summit was held online.

Events were developed with the intention of supporting a variety of comfort levels with online engagement and to create venues to receive feedback from attendees.

As accessible as possible

To make summit attendance more accessible for both for presenters and audience, planning considerations included:

- Providing presenters with an option to request support for access needs (e.g. childcare or food delivery)
- Providing flexibility on presentation format and adapting requirements as needed
- Paying CARFAC rates to presenters
- Providing ASL interpretation and closed captioning available at all events
- Creating an option for attendees to request supports through registration form or by contacting staff

Looking outward, but remaining focused on the region

With the exception of Jesse Wentz and Kenji Maeda, all speakers, panelists and presenters live or work in the region. Considerations went into ensuring that events included a broad diversity of perspectives in terms of art forms and roles, as well as identities and lived experiences.

Registrants and attendance

Members of the arts community and the general public were invited to register through email, social media and e-newsletter. Across all three sessions, 137 people registered for events and 110 people attended. Those who registered were a mix of arts organization administration staff, government, artists and community members (Figure 2).

Attendance and Turnout

The morning and mid-day sessions started with about 77 attendees and turnout of 70% (Figure 3). This is higher than expected given that attendance for free online events is often around 50% (source: Eventbrite). Attendance dropped somewhat in the afternoon session, as is expected for online events, particularly given the participatory nature of the last session.

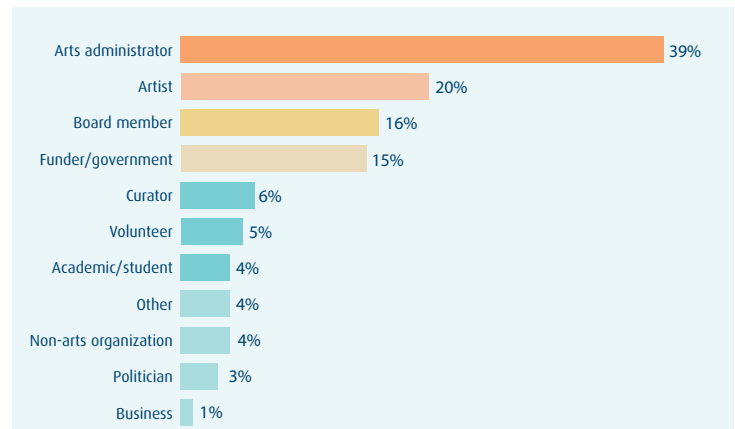


Figure 2: Roles of registrants in the arts sector (n=128)

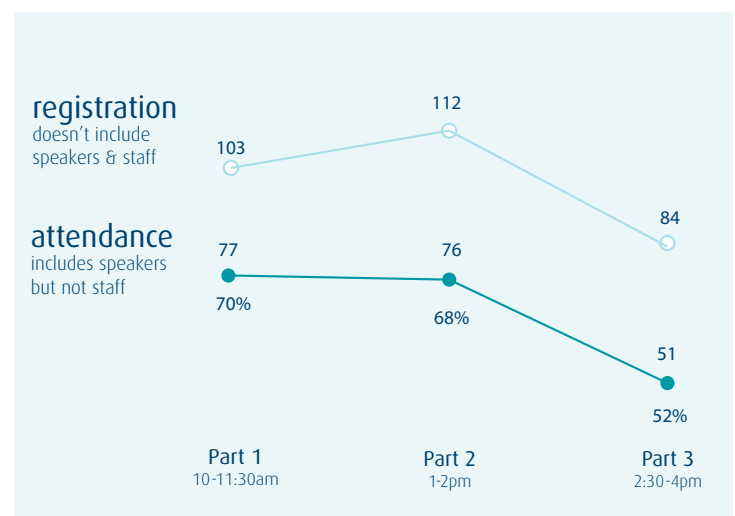


Figure 3: Registration and attendance at Arts Champions Summit

Summit Activities

Part 1: Welcomes and Arts Organizer PechaKuchas

The day started with a Traditional Welcome from Cecelia Dick of Songhees First Nations, followed by remarks from Arts Commission Chair Jeremy Loveday about the development of an equity lens for CRD Arts & Culture.

Welcomes were followed by PechaKuchas themed around 'Reframing the Arts for Equity.' Presentations celebrated the work of those embedded in equity-seeking communities who have led the way in developing more equitable and diverse programming in the region. Presentations were followed by a moderated Q&A.



PechaKuchas: Reframing the Arts for Equity

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde: I am Indigenous to my Body

Culture Den Society- 2021 Incubator Grant

Lindsay invited attendees to take part in a co-creative practice connecting to their body, and discussed the exploration of Indigenous sovereignty and matrilineal body wisdom honoring ancient pathways through creative acts. Her presentation underlies the creative expressions and exploration from Culture Den Society, and asked attendees to reflect inwards as a foundation to embodying and creating change.

“Part of equity and diversity is about how we hold space not just for ourselves but for other people with different perspectives... How do we create a safe atmosphere within ourselves so that we can provide that for other people?”

Tiffany Tjosvold: The Development of Chilly: Creating with a Specific Audience in Mind

Embrace Arts Foundation- 2021 Project Grant

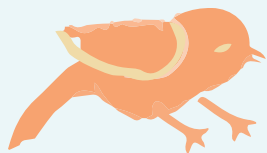
Tiffany took the audience through the development of a production intended for all audiences, but designed to be particularly exciting for neurodivergent kids and kids with complex care needs. Initially created as a public installation performance with multi-sensory components, Embrace Art's Chilly needed to be reinvented in the wake of COVID-19. Pivoting successfully to create an immersive online show, the production relied on the diverse genius of Embrace Art's neurodivergent, disabled, and non-disabled team.

“If you are not considering who you are making your work for, you have made a choice. You have picked a default audience: the audience that have historically written the reviews and books on performance. They definitely aren't the only audiences you could be making for.”

Mercedes Bádiz-Benét: Creating Opportunities for immigrant and IBPoC artists in our community
Puente Theatre- 2021 Annual Operating Grant

Asking the audience to challenge who they see as a playwright, Mercedes provided statistics highlighting discrepancies in representation and compensation for playwrights in Canada for women and particularly for IBPoC women, before highlighting the mentorship and residency programs created by Puente Theatre. These programs are aimed at providing infrastructure, networking, experience, exposure and most importantly income to IBPoC newcomer and female and gender diverse playwrights.

“We believe we are making a difference in how the arts look. Who gets to see themselves on stage, who feels like the arts are for them, whose experiences matter and who is welcome to the table. If you are asking yourself as an audience member what you can do to help us? Show up. Show up to their work. Show up to their plays. Help them share their stories.”



Kenji Maeda: Being in Community, Being in Conversation

Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance (GVPTA); artsvest BC

His childhood in Campbell River centred around his family's Japanese restaurant continues to inform Kenji's perspective and work. Kenji highlights the development of the GVPTA Community Council, which allows for more representation from communities who have historically been marginalized and underrepresented. Developed to be a third part of GVPTA's organizational model, community council planning considerations includes paying members for preparing and attending meetings, allowing flexible time commitments and responsibilities, addresses access needs as fundamental – all with the primary goal of building trust with community.

“We are at a critical time in the arts & culture community where organizations and individuals are at very different stages of understanding and action towards equitable practices...”

We often view the struggle and discomfort that we feel as a knot to untangle, but I believe that **the knot simply exists as it is, and represents a path** which will include twists and turns, ups and downs, steps forwards and backwards, whether **through developing policies or delving into difficult conversations.”**

Part 2: Interview with Jesse Wente, Canada Council Chair and Co-Executive Director of the Indigenous Screen Office

In this keynote event, two pivotal advocates for Indigenous arts and culture - Jesse Wente (Chair of Canada Council for the Arts) and Cathi Charles Wherry (Special Advisor, First Peoples' Cultural Council) came together to discuss the arts.

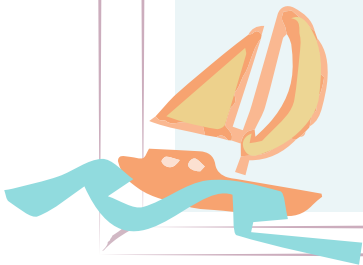
The conversation touched on Jesse's influences and teachers, as well as his work as the Co-Executive Director at the recently formed Indigenous Screen Office, highlighting the value of serving Indigenous community "in the way that community seeks to be served."

Quotes from Jesse Wente

"The potential for truly **transformational work... is when you empower communities** [marginalized by colonialism] to put that boat in the water and **get out of the way.**"

"**Sharing and giving up power does not make you less powerful.** It actually makes you more powerful. Where DEI runs into a wall is when it comes to giving up power. Western culture teaches you that these are zero-sum - that you either have power or you don't... that's not a real thing. ... giving up power will reward you as much as it does the other."

"**First Nations, Metis and Inuit people are sovereignty seeking, not equity seeking.** Thus solutions require a self-determinist approach. Inclusion isn't really an outcome we're necessarily looking for either. You got to throw all that stuff out. We're distinct in terms of the approach you have to take to our communities. Well guess what? So is every other community. The DEI framework as a catch-all fails every time, because what we're really ultimately talking about is **being in right relationship with one another.**"



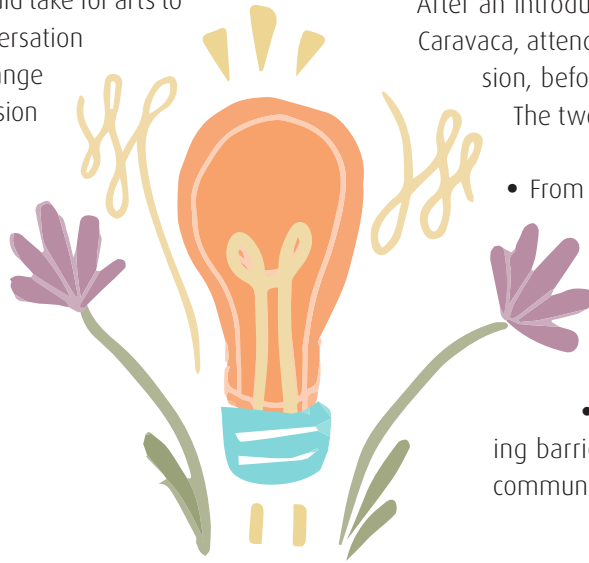
Participant feedback: "It was important to have this contribution from someone who operates in a context beyond what most in Victoria can imagine - where Indigenous People have agency and power in the domain of arts support. It's good to provide examples of great work that's already taking place, to illustrate how this can work. This push to act is needed."

Part 3: Panel & Breakout rooms

What are the big changes needed to make the arts equitable?

A panel of artists and arts workers (Regan Shrumm, Charles Campbell, Sarah Jim and Sean Guist, and moderated by Kenji Maeda) brainstormed what it would take for arts to be equitable. The intention of this conversation was to envision a broader scope of change that would allow for a more complete vision of equity in the region's arts.

The conversation touched on the role of arts organizations in advocating for community needs, expanding what is fundable by arts grants and having the courage to define what equity means.



Breakout rooms

In the final section of the summit, the regional arts community reflected and coalesced what they had heard throughout the day into actionable takeaways for themselves as well as CRD Arts & Culture.

After an introduction from EDI subcommittee chair Cris Caravaca, attendees split into breakout groups for discussion, before returning to the full group to debrief.

The two focus questions were:

- From the conversations you heard today, what is one thing that resonated for you and that you are going to take back to yourself or organization to make a commitment or take an action?
- What would support you most in reducing barriers or strengthening underrepresented communities in your organization or practice?

Post-Summit Survey

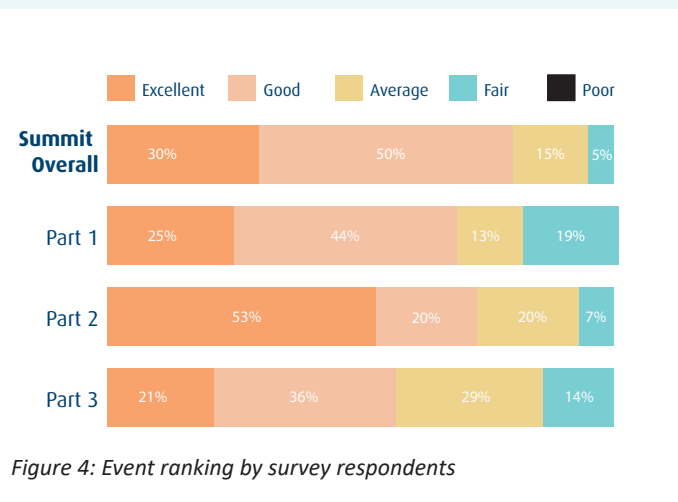
Attendees were sent a survey to allow them to provide feedback on the event and to capture feedback on progressing EDI in the region's arts. We received 31 responses, 21 of which were complete.

Feedback on Summit

Overall feedback on the summit was positive, with 80% of respondents rating it excellent or good (Figure 4). 81% percent of respondents said they were 'very likely' to attend a future CRD Arts & Culture event, while the other 19% said they were 'somewhat likely.'

Positive feedback on the summit focused on the diversity of speakers, the EDI theme, and providing a venue to provide feedback directly to CRD. Suggested changes for future events included opportunities for networking, more specific breakout rooms, more of a spread in sessions, and including hybrid and in-person components.

When asked about their preference on format for future events, 43% of respondents said they would prefer in-person, 38% preferred online, with the remaining 19% being unsure or having no preference.



What we heard

This feedback includes what we heard through the Arts Champions Summit from (3) local PechaKucha presenters, (4) panelists, feedback collected from (33) breakout sessions attendees and through (31) post-summit survey respondents. While the feedback is by no means comprehensive of the region's arts sector or marginalized communities, it provides some perspectives and insights. Feedback collected relates not only to CRD, but could have implications relevant to other funders, arts organizations and stakeholders in the region.

Theme 1: Sharing power & developing trust-based partnerships

A desire was voiced for funders and organizations to go beyond inclusion and diversity initiatives, and to share and give power to marginalized people and communities. Models that elicited interest included community councils, co-leadership, and partnerships with an emphasis on building trust and relationships and addressing access needs from the start.

It was identified that developing trust with communities is a process facilitated by communication and consistency and could be developed through smaller initiatives and sharing resources, including space, knowledge and skill-sharing as a precursor to larger partnerships.

“It’s not just about being invited to the party, but planning the party.”

Theme 2: Space as the limiting factor

Over-consultation around space development without significant results was a theme repeated throughout the summit and in the post-summit survey. Lack of space continues to be a limiting factor for the development of arts, particularly for those working in support of marginalized communities. There was a focus on the availability of ‘centralized accessible community spaces’ and a ‘sovereign Indigenous space/cultural centre that is governed by and serves local Indigenous communities.’ The need for a Westshore performing arts facility was also identified through the survey.

Identified uses for space include: hosting classes that are physically accessible and for healing for the arts activities, studio spaces allowing for a variety of media development, space to develop and present performances and other works, and live/work space for artists.

“The arts community knows how to be in community with each other if we are allowed to be. The limiting factor is space, which creates silos.”

“It is a vicious cycle. If we don’t have space, we don’t get the attention of the media, we don’t get audience members. It becomes that much harder for small organizations to help our communities.”

Theme 3: Accountability and urgency


Participants called for urgency from funders and established organizations to embody policies, action plans and outward messaging in tangible ways that are accountable and to the benefit of equity and sovereignty seeking communities.

Funders and organizations need to be specific in identifying who will benefit from EDI initiatives and develop a default of cultural safety and trauma-informed practices. Established arts organizations can open up communication and build trust with marginalized communities, by listening to their needs and responding with offers that might include sharing resources, such as space and information.

Survey respondents suggest that funders have a role in encouraging follow-through on commitments in adjudication processes, as well as providing education and skills-development to arts organizations.

“Listen to people with lived experiences, pay them, and then implement. Often the follow-through doesn’t happen.”

“One block for fulfilling the commitment is will, trust and courage.”



Theme 4: Remove systemic barriers from funding

We heard a call to remove systemic barriers and support needs to allow marginalized communities to access all types of funding, particularly sources that allows for stability and consistency.

Potential strategies to reducing barriers included removing unnecessary application and eligibility requirements, providing an option to provide verbal applications, reducing gatekeeping and providing dedicated administrative support for completing applications.

Similarly support for emerging organizations could including mentorship, information sharing, and skills development.

Ensuring funding supports individual artists, for both their basic needs as well as artistic development came up in the panel as well as survey responses. While one identified solution was to provide more opportunities for individual artists to apply for funding, it was also suggested that arts organizations need to act as a location to redistribute funding to artists.

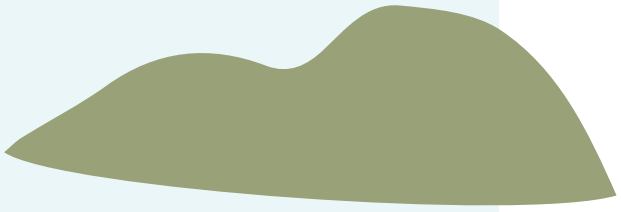
“Equity seems like something that is doled out to people and it’s almost built on a scarcity model.”



Theme 5: Value and desire for CRD Funding

Feedback in the post-summit survey was generally supportive of CRD’s role in arts funding and identified the need for more funds to be available, particularly to small and emerging organizations, which would ultimately provide support to artists and arts workers.

In the survey, funding was identified as allowing an organization to have “the stability and sustainability to address matters of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility” as well as to move forward projects that are inclusive and accessible from inception. Another funded organization identified that “more consistent funding would allow us to increase our capacity to deliver quality and accessible programming, while investing in the growth of homegrown administrative and artistic arts workers.”



Taking action

In October 2020, building on the success of CRD Arts & Culture’s Equity Grants program, the Arts Commission charged the Arts Advisory Council with applying an equity lens to all granting and operations. An EDI subcommittee was formed that engaged in research and consultation through multiple avenues, including an extensive jurisdictional scan of EDI best practices at other Canadian arts funders.

In January 2022, the Arts Advisory Council and Arts Commission, understanding the urgency of the current situation, endorsed an Implementation Framework for EDI Lens Integration, as proposed by the EDI subcommittee, as well as Phase 1, modifications to project based grants.

This ambitious implementation framework will apply an EDI lens to project based grants and operating grants, as well as budgeting, outreach, application and adjudication processes, and more (Figure 5).

Phase 1 has been approved and is being implemented for project based grants in Spring 2022. This phase includes:

- Modified program guidelines with a new Commitment to Equity;
- New EDI questions in the application form;
- Reduced administrative burden for financial statement reporting ;
- Highlighted eligible expenses in project budgets for Honoraria to Elders, Cultural Carriers and Cultural Protocols, as well as Access Costs (e.g. ASL, childcare);
- Expanded eligibility for Equity Grants;
- New options for submitting verbal final reports in Equity Grants; and
- Additional financial and educational resources for applicants and assessment panels.

The feedback gathered at the 2021 Arts Champions Summit provides crucial information to the EDI Subcommittee for consideration in implementation of the framework.



Figure 5: Timeline for EDI Implementation Framework