**Listening to the Sound of Social Transformation in Canada:
A Survey of Community and Arts Organizations**

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PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The *Listening to the Sound of Social Transformation* project ("Transformation") is being conducted under the auspices of the interdisciplinary *Research Centre for [Music, Sound, and Society in Canada](#)*. The project identified a need to develop an inventory and analysis of relevant entities (those engaged in arts projects that are equity seeking or address social justice goals in various forms), with a view to potential institutional and community partnerships.

The inventory and analysis serve:

- to take stock of entities (mainly but not exclusively in the Canadian context) that are engaged in relevant work (i.e., using the arts and prominently featuring sound/music to effect social change in one form or another); and

- to gauge the state of engagement across Canada as background to a planned team workshop in August 2022 of the 30+ researchers involved in the project.

This work identified relevant organizations and initiatives (local, national, and international) through consultations with team members and via online search strategies. The outputs of the project help lay the groundwork for subsequent outreach and discussions with potential partners to determine their interests, capacities, and needs.

In addition, the findings from this exercise are intended to assist in the refinement of Transformation project parameters and key messaging. The outputs of the scan are intended as internal documents (internal to the Transformation project) designed to assist in developing an eventual Letter of Intent (LOI) for the SSHRC Partnership Grant program and to lay the groundwork for subsequent research projects stemming from the Transformation initiative.

The resulting inventory is not a static document. Rather, it should be considered a living document to which the Transformation team is encouraged to add or modify as the project advances. As more entities and initiatives are newly identified, these could be included in the inventory and shared among team members.

Jeff Frank is completing the Honours Bachelor of Arts in Music program at Carleton University (graduation expected in Spring 2023). With a lifelong passion for music, Jeff recently retired from a 30-year career in the federal public service, where he was a leader in policy research and program operations, including at Statistics Canada, the Policy Research Initiative, Employment and Social Development Canada, and most recently as Director General with the Public Service Commission of Canada. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Economics (Toronto, 1987) and a Master of Arts in Public Administration (Carleton, 1989).

BACKGROUND

The Transformation project seeks to examine the competing crosscurrents of social transformation that mark 21st century Canada through community-engaged research on sound and music. Community-engaged research represents a core value of the initiative. Specifically, the Transformation project contends that community-engaged research-creation and critical pedagogies can be instrumental in assisting communities to tell their stories and to propose innovative ideas for social transformation and equitable social relations. The project also seeks to explore and analyze the role of equity policy initiatives in major arts institutions in Canada in effecting systemic change.

With these principles in mind, the strategic goals of the project include:

- Improving communication across significant social divides intersected by socioeconomics, ability, race, gender, and sexual orientation; and

- Critically examining the operations of music and sound in and through social institutions and proposing innovative social interventions through music and sound arts.

The Transformation project is organized into three streams:

- Mapping the sound of institutions in transition;

- Facilitating community-engaged research-creation projects for social transformation; and

- Developing critical pedagogies of music, sound, and media.

Expected outcomes of phase one activities, as stated in the Multidisciplinary Research Catalyst Fund (MRCF) application, include:

- A tool kit of technologies, practices, and policies for community-engaged arts activism across our different academic and arts contexts;

- An expanded list of community partners and participating public sector arts institutions in Ottawa, across Canada, and internationally; and

- Applications for major external grants through the SSHRC Partnership Program and the Canada Council for the Arts Strategic Innovation Fund.

METHODOLOGY

<u>Orientation</u>: As part of and following the development and approval of the assignment proposal, project orientation involved several discussions with the project supervisor and the review of the original MRCF submission, including bios of the 30+ researchers and partners affiliated with the project to date. (It was also serendipitous that I had participated in Ellen Waterman's 4th-year seminar on *Contemporary Practices of Music and Sound Art in Canada* in Winter 2022, during which we engaged with a broad range of concepts related to sound art and various forms of research-creation.)

<u>Research ethics</u>: We considered early on whether the project might be subject to Carleton University research ethics oversight. Professor Waterman had communicated with the Research Ethics Board and received written confirmation (dated April 20, 2022) that the project entailed consultation (and not research as defined by the TCPS2) and did not require an ethics review.

<u>Researcher input</u>: Following an introductory email by Dr. Waterman, I solicited the 30+ researchers for their input and suggestions for entities and projects that should be on the Transformation project's radar. About half of the researchers responded to the call, with several providing quite detailed input. These suggestions and leads, because of their existing proximity to Transformation researchers, likely hold important potential for project partnerships. Approximately 60 entries were identified through this approach.

<u>Keyword scan</u>: A supplementary search strategy was employed to identify additional relevant entities and initiatives. These internet searches involved a consistent set of keywords (e.g., *sound art, music, community, social change, research*) and were additionally narrowed by province/territory and by municipality. Subsequent ad hoc searches resulted in dozens of additional entries, including many in rural locations. Nearly 100 entities were identified using keyword scans.

<u>Discussion and analysis</u>: Through reflection and discussions with the supervisor as the project progressed, I kept stock of my observations for inclusion in the project report. Neither the inventory nor its analysis can be considered exhaustive, but these products form the foundation for an evergreen resource and basis for discussion by Transformation project participants.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

An MS-Excel spreadsheet has been used to capture the <u>inventory of organizations and initiatives</u> for this project. The spreadsheet is organized by municipality and province/territory and identifies organizations' key players, contact information, web links, mission information, etc. In addition, a comments column includes information on which researcher made the suggestion and could also serve as a transaction log for subsequent interactions with participating entities. A field for "capacity/needs" will likely best be completed through follow-up discussions with the various organizations.

The <u>project report</u> (this current document) sets out the purpose and scope, background, and methodology for the exercise. It seeks to take stock of and identify patterns among entities engaged in arts activism in Canada, including areas of specialization, client groups, and potential gaps. It also includes several sample entity profiles to illustrate the range of potential partners, their interests, and capacities. Finally, the report reflects on insights gained while assembling the inventory and makes some observations about the strategic choices available to the Transformation project.

OBSERVATIONS

It is challenging to generalize about the diverse range of entities captured (over 150 in total) in the inventory developed for this project. The exercise identified a diversity of players: from individual researchers to university research centres, to grassroots community organizations, to arts funders large and small. Their areas of interest and activity also covered a broad range, including issues faced by Indigenous peoples, environmental and ecological concerns, issues related to children and youth, persons with disabilities, as well as recent efforts aimed at fostering individual and organizational resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In general, the review did not aim to capture the more established, institutional players and funders that characterize the Canadian arts scene (e.g., Canada Council for the Arts, national museums, provincial and local arts councils, etc.), as these are generally well known and easily referenced. Instead, the scan identified a range of lesser-known entities operating locally or more broadly and working in various arts activism domains and with different client populations.

Already though, areas of potential synergy are evident, including the different kinds of partnerships, when viewed in light of the interests and expertise among project team members. A portrait of the range and diversity of entities and their activities emerges as one sifts through local grassroots organizations with their closeness to their client groups and emphasis on local, place-based initiatives, compared with larger institutions and their relative means in terms of resources and capacities. Many organizations are engaged in arts presentation, others focus on engaging or benefitting specific target groups of interest, while still others emphasize knowledge creation: all with a range of social development or equity-seeking objectives, and with a range of research interests and designs.

For many entities, their social justice aims are clear and obvious. For others, any explicit egalitarian goals are more integrated into their activities. Interest in diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility overall (incorporation of an IDEA lens or similar) is pervasive. Even among organizations that are primarily arts presenters, an emphasis on diversity, inclusion, equity, and/or accessibility—as reflected in their mission, values, team membership, etc.—is nearly universal.

This inclination toward IDEA was to be expected since the search strategy prioritized organizations engaged in arts activism and various forms of participatory research. As noted in the Next Steps section, some effort toward identifying organizations representing discordant social aims might also prove worthwhile to assist in understanding the dynamics within which arts activism takes place and to enhance the chances of success of related initiatives.

Judging by the number and diversity of organizations included in this scan, arts for social change is a burgeoning field of endeavour. The Transformation project fills an important niche at a time when various trends and movements are poised to profoundly influence Canadian society and public policy. Examples of such movements include: reconciliation between Canadian governments and Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, different streams of disability and anti-poverty activism, various anti-racism movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter), and activism related to climate change and the environment. Interestingly, relatively few among the organizations identified held central aims related to gender parity or gender/sexuality activism; this may represent a gap in the field and potentially an opportunity for the Transformation project.

Issues and client groups of interest

A set of strategic choices is available for the Transformation project to specialize in one or more areas of arts activism. This might end up being a function of the expertise and activities of the 30+ researchers already affiliated with the project. The eventual areas of focus could be the result of a conscious strategy to build on areas of comparative advantage and expertise among the team or to fill perceived gaps where a critical mass of arts projects for social change may be lacking.

Other considerations in establishing an eventual portfolio of projects include: geography, including a mix of urban and rural settings; diversity among target audiences (e.g., underrepresented socio-cultural groups, demographic groups, official as well as minority language representation); and the subject-matters or issue domains in which these groups and relevant entities are active (e.g., Indigenous interests, environmental, ability/disability, etc.).

⇒ *In establishing a portfolio of future activities, the Transformation project could opt to choose the degree of desired specialization across a range of possible arts activism domains.*

Community-Engaged Research Design and Evaluation

Relevant existing and future initiatives often include a strong participatory component from among community members or from pertinent constituencies (a sentiment captured by the adage, "nothing about us without us"). Relevant initiatives, particularly those stemming from scholarly projects or involving academic partnerships, frequently

integrate research and/or evaluation frameworks that allow for the outcomes and impacts to be measured. In establishing new projects, including practice-based research and research-creation projects, consideration could be given to what evaluation approaches they might appropriately include.

⇒ *The Transformation project may wish to articulate the range of project designs that would lend themselves to the initiative and/or identify examples or case studies of the kinds of participatory designs that merit replication or emulation.*

The *Singing the Earth* project out of Victoria, British Columbia serves as an example of a viable research-creation project, which featured a deliberate, community-engaged design. "*Nuyamł-ił Kulh*ulmx, or *Singing the Earth*, is a response to the people, environment, and spirit of the Bella Coola Valley of coastal British Columbia. It draws on historical and contemporary sources in four languages - Nuxalk, Norwegian, English and Japanese - to create 11 short pieces about an isolated and beautiful place."
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct1Zmk9g8Ms&t=1s

One organization regularly engaged in research-creation is the Institute for Research in Music and Community (IRMC) at Brandon University "brings together creators, performing musicians and scholars, as well as representatives of the music industry, government, non-profit organizations, and listeners to better understand how musical communities develop and evolve through the influence of societal, stylistic, environmental, technological, and other factors."
https://irmc.ca/

Resources and Opportunities in the National Capital Region

Given Carleton University's coordinating role in the Transformation project, it could be worth considering the resources that exist in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the extent to which the initiative might build on related opportunities. Some of the local advantages that the Transformation project could choose to leverage include:

- the relative concentration of team members located in the area with relevant expertise in research, music, and other disciplines;

- the relevant missions and unique attributes of various potential partners located in the NCR (e.g., grassroots organizations, cultural institutions, community campus radio, etc.);

- proximity to several Indigenous communities (e.g., Pikwakanagan, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Akwesasne); and

- the bilingual nature of the region, including bilingual capacity among many individuals and organizations.

SAMPLE PROFILES – POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The small sampling of arts organizations below illustrates the range of entities encountered that could potentially represent partners for future Transformation projects. These organizations were selected for being "not the usual suspects," as their focus is on arts presentation and/or engaging specific populations, and not primarily on research-creation or the generation of new knowledge more generally.

That said, emerging Transformation projects that seek, for example, to test interventions or work with certain underrepresented groups might consider partnering with such organizations that have experience, expertise, and ready access to a range of communities or movements. Offering project design and research expertise to such grassroots organizations represents one potentially effective formula for examining the Sound of Social Transformation in Canada. In implementing research projects, reciprocal collaboration and service to communities will also be important to offset the demands placed on the limited resources of participating organizations.

"**The 4Cs Foundation** provides grants, education and other opportunities for community arts projects that inspire, empower, and connect children and their communities in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We believe that creating art together fosters the development of relationships, builds connections, and strengthens communities."
http://www.4csfoundation.com

"*Afros in Tha City* is a media collective based in Calgary, Alberta. The organization is dedicated to amplifying Black voices in the region, including writing about music, current pop culture and local events, to bring visibility to notable Black figures in media, as well as to challenge essentialist ideas about Black personhood."
https://www.afrosinthacity.com

The **Nunavut Arts Centre** seeks to "strengthen, promote, advocate and create space for Nunavut Performing Artists," while guided by principles of decolonization, healing and wellness, Inuit language and culture, and diversity and inclusion.
https://www.qaggiavuut.ca

The (Toronto-based) **ArtsCan Circle** "has sent artists to over 16 remote communities to facilitate creative art workshops for youth. In addition, they have shipped over 40,000 harmonicas and countless violins, keyboards, fiddles, ukuleles and guitars, and impacted over 10,000 Indigenous youth."
https://artscancircle.ca

Also based in Toronto, **SKETCH** "is a community arts enterprise engaging diverse young people, ages 16-29, from across Canada, who live homeless or on the margins and navigate poverty to: experience the transformative power of the arts; build leadership and self-sufficiency in the arts; and cultivate social and environmental change through the arts."
https://www.sketch.ca

"**L'Œil de Poisson** est un centre d'artistes autogéré dont la mission favorise la recherche, la création, la diffusion et la production des pratiques métadisciplinaires en art actuel. Il soutient les approches expérimentales, innovantes et audacieuses d'artistes et de commissaires, établis et émergents, et favorise leur rayonnement tant au Québec qu'à l'international."
http://www.oeildepoisson.com

Other Sights for Artists' Projects Association represents an interesting model, whereby the non-profit society "operates as a collective of Vancouver-based individuals with expertise in curation, project management, presentation, delivery and promotion of temporary art projects in public spaces."
https://othersights.ca

Even with this small sample, the examples above also serve to illustrate the range of communities served and issues addressed by such arts initiatives. These include children and education in Halifax, Inuit artists in Nunavut, black youth in Calgary, Indigenous youth in various remote locations, poverty and homelessness across Canada, as well as more generic capacity (in Quebec City and Vancouver) intended to support arts projects with various social justice goals.

NEXT STEPS

The goal of the current exercise has been to lay the groundwork for partner discussions and eventual research projects under the umbrella of the Transformation initiative. It also provides an information base that will serve as an ongoing resource for the project team going forward. During the August project team meeting, for example, it may be worthwhile to take stock of existing initiatives and interests among the project team to identify potential synergies. It will also be important to identify possible gaps in the field of arts activism, which may represent opportunities for new activities.

In terms of further background work that could be conducted to support the Transformation project, a complementary scan of organizations representing discordant social aims might be important. Such organizations may not necessarily become 'partners' but they would give us a window into "drivers of discord." The built-in bias of this scan was that it sought to identify arts organizations with social justice aims consistent with the aspirations of the Transformation project.

⇒ *The Transformation project may more broadly wish to consider: What might we need to do in future to ensure that we are also listening with open ears to contrary positions?*

The Transformation project is planning a multidisciplinary research program to examine social transformation in Canada through community-engaged research on sound and music. The confluence of the expertise, interests, and activities of the Transformation researcher network with a vibrant and diverse set of arts activism organizations and

initiatives across Canada represents a unique opportunity to establish a program of research to turn up the volume on the sound of social transformation, thereby increasing understanding of the drivers of discord, promoting civil discourse, and identifying arts-based interventions that can advance social justice.

APPENDIX:
OTHER RESOURCES IDENTIFIED DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT

While conducting this scan, I encountered several peripherally related reports and directories. These are listed here for reference purposes in case they prove useful to the Transformation team. Of particular utility for the current scan was the Online Directory of Artist-Run Centres maintained by the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCC), which helped identify many additional organizations (including rural ones) found in the inventory.

REPORTS:

Aboriginal Healing Foundation Report
https://www.ahf.ca/downloads/healing-through-creative-arts.pdf

Alberta Study
https://www.westanthem.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/West-Anthem_Final-Report-Music-Ecosystem-Study_12_16_2020.pdf

Alberta Foundation for the Arts
https://www.affta.ab.ca

NB Study
https://www.musicnb.org/sites/default/files/pdf/sound_impact_-_industry_study_2015_-_music_nb.pdf

NL Study
https://musicnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Music-NL-Industry-Study-and-Economic-Impact-V2.pdf

Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council; Social Benefits of Culture Study
https://creative.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/inline/images/cnslc.pdf

Creative Manitoba 2017 Study
https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/imaginecreative/discussion-paper.pdf

SaskCulture
https://www.saskculture.ca/content/generic_atoms/titlefilecaption-files/19.3.04._Cultural_Benefits.pdf

Downtown Eastside Vancouver dissertation
https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/NR90124.PDF?is_thesis=1&oclc_number=910984518

Vancouver Arts Ecosystem Study
https://musicbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Vancouver-full-report-FINAL-19_07_2018.pdf

Vancouver Cultural Plan
https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-culture-shift.pdf

Approaches to Social Justice in Community Music Settings (Bo-rum Hammond, McGill University)
http://www.cfmta.org/docs/essays/CFMTA-Approaches-to-Social-Justice-in-Community-Music-Settings.pdf

Exploring Social Justice: How Music Education Might Matter
https://books.google.ca/books?id=dtCCBAAAQBAJ&pg=PR8&lpg=PR8&dq=music+sound+art+research+community+social+justice+saskatchewan&source=bl&ots=zLABVIvVrP&sig=ACfU3U2qxLlQjUBIDgRGB-ymzeA05RPY1A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjT54Cg-5b5AhVOhYkEHbcrCYQ4ChDoAXoECBcQAw#v=onepage&q=music%20sound%20art%20research%20community%20social%20justice%20saskatchewan&f=false

Soundscapes of Resistance: Amplifying social justice activism and aural counterpublics through field recording-based sound practices
https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/organised-sound/article/abs/soundscapes-of-resistance-amplifying-social-justice-activism-and-aural-counterpublics-through-field-recordingbased-sound-practices/EF45BDC817C653B09EA0F1EB78B6B75C

Hill Strategies: Innovation & Resilience in Canada's Cultural Sector
https://hillstrategies.com/cultural-resilience-project/

Hill Strategies: Benefits of Arts Participation
https://hillstrategies.com/resource/canadians-arts-participation-health-and-well-being/

DIRECTORIES:

ACTRA Music Resource Directory
https://actraracs.ca/membership/artist-industry-resources/

Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCC): Online Directory of Artist-Run Centres
https://directory.arca.art

BC Arts Directory
https://artsbc.org/membership-directory/#!directory/map

Canadian Independent Music Association; directory of funding sources:
https://cimamusic.ca/news/funding-deadlines

Charity Village list of arts organizations
https://charityvillage.com/organizations/directory/arts/

Music Schools in Canada
https://www.careersinmusic.com/music-schools-canada/

National, Regional and Provincial Music Associations (CIMA)
https://cimamusic.ca/advocacy/canadas-independent-music-industry/national-regional-and-provincial-music-associations