

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 2026

**RESET.  
REFOCUS.  
REIMAGINE.**

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## Letter from the Chief Executive Officer and Board Liaison, Strategic Planning

At the time of writing, the world is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, and anxiety is dominating so many of our lives.

What has remained unchanged, however, is Indefinite Arts Centre's resiliency and adaptability in ensuring that we provide the platforms and supports necessary to our growing community of artists living with disabilities. Through a combination of both virtual and mail-in programs, we continue to engage with more than 95% of our artist community. More importantly, we are giving our artists the tools and supports needed to continue their journey – as artists.

Though COVID-19 has made many things unclear, one unmistakable truth has emerged: we are an essential, vital service to our community. Our programs continue to bring the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities together through the power of art. And we are giving our artists a sense of purpose during this endless period of isolation.

Now, more than ever before, not only do we need to be there for our artists, but – in light of recent movements that have magnified the inequalities that still exist in our society – we also feel a moral responsibility to showcase and demonstrate the remarkable creativity of our artists in communities both locally and around the world.

Much of this work has already started with our existing strategic plan. By benchmarking our program designs against well-known arts training and presenting institutions like the Banff Centre, we've made tremendous strides in advancing training, creation, and exhibition opportunities for more artists than ever before in our organization's history. Furthermore, by leveraging extraordinary local and international partnerships, we've participated in and convened numerous 1:1 and large group conversations around the value of incorporating more diverse voices in our arts and culture ecosystem.

We're making a difference – and we're ready to do more.

We want to see more communities across our country recognizing and celebrating the contributions made by artists with disabilities, not just in the visual arts but across disciplines. To do that, we need to be a leader nationally, setting out high standards in program design and delivery, and giving our artists the right space and stage to properly showcase their talent and inspire others to follow.

Ultimately, what we are talking about is making Calgary and Alberta the epicentre of our country's disability arts movement. And we have all the ingredients to make this happen.

We have an amazing team of staff and volunteers. By welcoming our sister organizations Artistic Expressions and Momo Movement into our fold, we are now equipped with the infrastructure to expand our program disciplines. Most importantly, we have public and private sector partners – and a growing community of donors – who believe in the work that we do and invest in our artists and our organization.

And this is why we're hitting the "reset" button, refocusing our efforts in the face of this new reality, and reimagining our exciting future ahead.

On behalf of our board and staff, we are pleased to present to you *Reset. Refocus. Reimagine.*, the next stage in our organization's development as we evolve into becoming the National accessArts Centre.

We hope you will join us for this wild, yet rewarding, ride ahead.

Yours sincerely,



**Jung-Suk (JS) Ryu**

Chief Executive Officer  
National accessArts Centre



**Robert Roach**

Board Liaison, Strategic Planning  
Member, Board of Directors  
National accessArts Centre

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# RESET. REFOCUS. REIMAGINE.







## Setting the stage.

In 2018, Indefinite Arts Centre moved into a bold new direction guided by its five-year strategic plan, *This is Our Moment*. We claimed our space as Canada's oldest and largest disability arts organization and started to move away from operating and being seen as a disability service organization or "day program." By bringing on board a roster of new team members – almost all professional artists in their own right – and by engaging in partnerships with the country's arts and culture sector, we positioned ourselves as a bona fide arts organization, delivering extraordinary programs to a community of more than 300+ talented artists living with disabilities.

Results were almost immediate. Thanks to the investments made by our public and private sector partners, as well as the generosity of a growing number of individual donors, our capacity grew by over 60% in less than three years. This added capacity was then deployed to launch new innovative programs and initiatives including artist residencies at the Leighton Art Centre in the heart of the Alberta foothills and more recently at the brand new Contemporary Calgary space. We also partnered with Global Affairs Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts to showcase our artists' works in exciting new markets overseas, including Hong Kong, Dubai, Guadalajara, and New York.

To support our artists' practice, we've invited more external artists into our community than ever before in our organization's history. Contemporary, mainstream artists were asked to lead workshops, share deep insights into their own practice, and work alongside and learn from our artists' perspectives.

We applied this creative growth in our artists to exciting projects in partnership with the City of Calgary. Through two major public art projects, more than \$25,000 in commission cheques have been issued over the past two years to selected artists whose works can be seen in communities throughout Calgary. This work complements our additional efforts to provide artists with the opportunity to showcase and sell their works in venues such as Market Collective as well as online through our ongoing partnership with Calgary-based blockchain startup firm UppstArt.

With all that we've accomplished, just over two years after the launch of our current strategic plan, the stage is set for us to dream even bigger about our future as an organization – and the future of our artists. We've proven again and again that when we set bold goals, we achieve them and then some. Despite all the change and uncertainty surrounding us, we are ready.

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## The world around us.

COVID-19 forced so many organizations to transform the way we operate programs and maintain a public presence – and Indefinite Arts Centre was no different. In less than two weeks following the global shutdown in March 2020, the Centre launched a whole new suite of programs that focused on maintaining some level of normalcy for our community of artists, including daily studio sessions utilizing the Zoom platform, providing instructional guides and videos online, and sending artist supply kits monthly – ensuring that our artists would be able to continue to create and share their artistic practice to their peers and to the broader community.

At the same time, COVID-19 has motivated many in the arts and culture sector to think about their future sustainability, and Indefinite Arts Centre has been at the heart of some important conversations impacting our sister disability arts organizations Artistic Expressions (serving a community of artists with physical and acquired disabilities) and Momo Movement (a celebrated mixed ability dance company). Leading up to the time of writing, both organizations have agreed to – or have finalized – a process that would bring their operations and programs into Indefinite Arts Centre’s fold, leveraging our existing infrastructure of staff and financial resources to ensure ongoing growth and expanded possibilities in the provision of pan-disability, multidisciplinary programming.

All of these developments also come at a time when serious questions are being asked of all agencies – including Indefinite Arts Centre – around whether we are contributing to or attempting to resolve systemic racism or discrimination against vulnerable, marginalized communities. As a proud equity-seeking organization, the Centre feels a high level of responsibility and accountability in doing our part to break down systemic barriers because the very community we serve to support has experienced the same discrimination as individuals who are black, Indigenous, or of colour. For us, this means we need to stand with our allies, offering our support and our expertise while also seeking the same from others, so that we can jointly create a more equitable society for all communities.





# RESET. REFOCUS. REIMAGINE.

## Reset.

When Indefinite Arts Centre launched its strategic plan, *This is Our Moment*, there was some doubt and trepidation around whether we could accomplish what we set out in our plan. Upon careful review of the plan and its goals and key performance indicators, we are pleased to see that we've accomplished so much during the past two and a half years of implementation – way ahead of schedule.

Now, with COVID-19 as well as new developments in our local disability arts community, there is a need to look at all layers of our organization, beginning with a new mission and vision that reflects our pan-disability and multidisciplinary approach – new realities that are the result of our recent mergers with Artistic Expressions and Momo Movement – as well as the framework that underpins our program design, responding to a new reality that integrates more digital, online, and broadcasting platforms than ever before.

## Refocus.

COVID-19 is motivating our organization to think differently about how and what kinds of programs and supports we deliver to our growing community of artists. Over the past several months due to the global shutdown, the Centre has explored new digital platforms for artistic training, creation, and exhibition/presentation opportunities for our artists – and strongly believe in the value of maintaining digital streams of program delivery into the future.

Underpinning our current and future digital programs will be the introduction of our new digital platform artJourney, currently under development by local tech firm Northweather thanks to an extraordinary investment made by the Canada Council for the Arts' Digital Strategy Fund. With more clarity around how artJourney and our digital programs are designed and delivered, the Centre will need to focus on investing in the technology and infrastructure required to support the evolution of our programs.

At the same time, we know that the core of our programming – realized in the form of self-directed studio access and support – will always remain, though we now see the incredible synergies that form when we build bridges to the mainstream arts community across our city and country. In addition to providing space for our community of artists with disabilities, we need to also focus our efforts on how we intentionally break down siloes and barriers that present a divide between the arts and “disability” arts.

## Reimagine.

Now is the time to be bold in reimagining the fullest potential of what our organization can be – and what it can do in transforming the lives of Canadians living with disabilities, communities across Canada, and our arts and culture sector. With this heightened ambition comes a need to also reimagine what our facility looks like and how it can be as nimble and adaptable to ongoing change.

New brand.

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**OUR HOME WILL ALWAYS BE CALGARY.**

Now, we will draw the country's – and the world's – attention to this great city as one of a few global epicentres of artistic excellence in providing artistic training, creation, and exhibition/presenting platforms for artists with disabilities. Our work, however, will no longer be limited to the four walls of our facility. Rather, we see a role for us to move beyond physical space, providing leadership and support to a national community of artists with disabilities – and through all of our efforts, we will expand our role as an unwavering voice that advocates for increased access to and inclusion in the arts.

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# NATIONAL accessARTS CENTRE

New vision and mission.

**We are the National accessArts Centre.**

## VISION.

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**Communities across Canada recognize, celebrate, and proactively include the talents and skills of artists with disabilities.**

## MISSION.

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**Providing artistic training, creation, exhibition, and presenting opportunities for artists with disabilities, and sharing the power of their creativity through local and global partnerships and advocacy that opens doors for their inclusion in our arts and culture ecosystem.**



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## New compass.

### EXCELLENCE.

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- We are an arts organization, supporting artists in reaching new levels of excellence.
- We strive for the highest standards in every facet of our work.
- We offer our artists the best platforms for training, creation, and exhibitions/presenting.

### COURAGE.

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- We are unapologetic social change agents.
- We always challenge the status quo.
- We have the courage to ask questions and test societal assumptions about diversity and inclusion.

### EMPOWERMENT.

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- We empower our team and our artists to harness opportunities to succeed and push boundaries.
- We empower our team and our artists to see their fullest potential.

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Our pillars, our foundation – remain intact.

01

## **Artistic Training**

Artistic training at the National accessArts Centre (NaAC) takes many forms. From facilitation and support taking place in our studio spaces to workshops delivered by mainstream artists, artist choice and self-directed learning remains at the heart of our artistic training platforms.

02

## **Creation**

The NaAC is all about providing a blank slate. Whether it's our fully-equipped studio environment or our many active partnerships with local and national arts organizations, our participating artists are given the opportunities to explore new ways of channeling their creativity in both visual and performing arts mediums.



# 03

## **Exhibitions + Presenting**

Showcasing our artists' incredible talents through exhibitions and presenting is not only a key pillar of our organization, but also a responsibility in ensuring that our artists are recognized and celebrated by existing and new audiences – locally, nationally, and around the world.

# 04

## **Sharing**

Building on the successes of Indefinite Arts Centre, the NaAC will continue to be a thought leader and advocate on matters that impact the inclusion and recognition of artists with disabilities in our broader arts and culture ecosystem.

# Artistic Training

## CONTEXT:

**GOAL:** Guided by the strengths, needs and aspirations of artists with disabilities, the NaAC will establish a new artist training framework that pushes boundaries – giving the artists the opportunities to advance their individual practice and develop and grow as leaders in their field.

**INITIATIVE 1.1:** Launch a hybrid program delivery model with digital elements that allow for recording, livestreaming, and immersive learning experiences for artists.

- Continuing on our successes delivering artistic training opportunities using platforms like Zoom, the NaAC will explore opportunities for more high-quality, accessible broadcast/livestreaming modules that utilize the latest augmented/virtual reality and 3D image and motion capture technology to be used across visual and performing arts disciplines.

**INITIATIVE 1.2:** Proactively compile and develop learnings and best practices through our own artistic training initiatives.

- Carried forward from our last strategic plan, the NaAC will launch a 3-year data compilation initiative in 2021 led by staff and facilitators and, where funding is available, seek additional support to better analyze outcomes and other key data sources.

**INITIATIVE 1.3:** Develop specific training opportunities tailored to an artists' stage of practice.

- With a community of more than 300 artists living with disabilities, the NaAC will more actively develop tailored training opportunities that will better support each artist's short- and long-term goals.

*Mentorships can play a key role here, with both NaAC artists mentoring other aspiring artists with disabilities, as well as external artists joining our community and engaging in a two-way learning journey.*

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# Creation

## Context:

**GOAL:** The NaAC will create brave spaces for experimentation and commissioning of works that span and connect multiple disciplines.

**INITIATIVE 2.1:** Expand opportunities for collaborative and multidisciplinary creation.

- Made possible by our recent merger with Momo Movement, we now have the infrastructure to develop multidisciplinary projects that open our artists' horizons. This, in addition to our existing and future partnerships with others in our sector, will open the doors to new exciting works that expand in the disciplines such as dance, music, and literary arts.

**INITIATIVE 2.2:** Push boundaries with more emphasis on digital and large-scale projects.

- The NaAC will further develop infrastructure and deploy resources to provide opportunities for non-traditional forms of creation, including the use of digital technology (e.g., green screen technology, virtual reality, 3D capture) and the application of our artists' creativity on larger-scale platforms (e.g., larger canvases or performing spaces).

**INITIATIVE 2.3:** Create more opportunities to be engaged in the display of our artists' works in more publicly accessible venues (e.g., public art).

- Building on Indefinite Arts Centre's recent successes, the NaAC will continue to be a part of the development of public art – at the local, regional, and national levels as well as spanning both visual and performing arts – so that artists with disabilities are proportionally represented and seen as part of our public art landscape.

02



# NATIONAL accessARTS CENTRE



# Exhibitions + Presenting

## Context:

**GOAL:** The NaAC will embrace exhibitions and presenting opportunities as creative platforms for artists. We will showcase the works, contexts and stories of artists through diverse and sometimes unexpected approaches, and will also support opportunities for artists themselves to lead the design and execution of their exhibitions or productions.

**INITIATIVE 3.1:** Expand opportunities that provide income-generating opportunities for artists.

- Guided by our principle that artists with disabilities are indeed artists, the NaAC will both provide and seek out opportunities that provide commissioning, exhibiting, and presenting fees for our artists. This will include expanding performance opportunities for ensembles, both public and private commissions for our visual artists, art sales opportunities, as well as the expansion of our artist-led workshops.

**INITIATIVE 3.2:** Provide spaces for artists to engage with the public in both digital and in-person conversations.

- Within the next five years, the NaAC will convene an annual festival that spans across disciplines and showcases the talents and skills of artists with disabilities. Similar to the Rendezvous with Madness festival in Toronto, this festival will be a commissioning and presenting opportunity that also adds to the City of Calgary's vibrant arts/culture and festival scenes.

*Partnerships will be critical in achieving success with both the goal and the initiatives outlined. These partnerships include not only arts and culture organizations, but business and other not-for-profit organizations, as well as traditional and social media broadcasting agencies.*

03



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# Sharing

## Context:

**GOAL:** The NaAC will be a recognized listener, leader, and convener of vital conversations about art and disability. We are in solidarity with the larger community of marginalized groups, and will be fierce advocates for understanding and change in the broader issues around equity and social justice.

**INITIATIVE 4.1:** Position and provide opportunities for artists with disabilities to be seen and recognized as thought leaders.

- The NaAC will expand its Jane Cameron Fellowship initiative, providing more leadership development opportunities for artists with disabilities.
- At all areas of program design, we will also look at how to position artists as producers, facilitators, and mentors so that more of their creativity is applied at a leadership level.

**INITIATIVE 4.2:** Expand our public policy and advocacy work in the arts/culture sector to also take form in other equity-seeking communities.

- The NaAC will be a facilitator and convener of conversations around issues of inclusion and diversity in the arts, including an expansion of our interview and speakers' series.
- The organization will also build more bridges with artists outside our main community, highlighting the intersectionality between issues and systemic barriers that exist across the disability community as well as other marginalized, vulnerable communities.

**INITIATIVE 4.3:** Expand our digital presence.

- Our artJourney platform will be at the foundation of our expanding digital presence, leveraging existing and building new networks that will open up a whole new community of peers and opportunities for artists with disabilities.
- In addition, our efforts on social media and other digital platforms will have an increased focus on artists and their perspectives.

04



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# Ingredients for future success.

## **New facility:**

**“The future of the arts will look different – so should funding for arts infrastructure.”**

*Jung-Suk Ryu, CEO, quoted in the Calgary Herald (May 23, 2020)*

From 2018-2020, work has focused on building out new spaces that would open the doors for a live theatre venue and more studio/rehearsal space for participating artists and the broader community. This vision, which initially used the National accessArts Centre moniker, was tremendously exciting as it meant that there would be a grand physical space that would put Calgary on the map as a national hub for the disability arts.

This strategic plan has articulated how we have reimagined our future – partially due to the effects of COVID-19. Now, we are reimagining our space. With an increased focus on digital program design and content creation, we see the need for our physical infrastructure to be able to support both the provision of space for visual and performing arts, but also the production and dissemination of content that will allow our organization to reach out to communities beyond our four walls.

To this end, we are excited to share that the NaAC , with support from The City of Calgary and other partners, will begin the transition to a new facility that will offer the necessary space and accessibility requirements to help fulfill our strategic goals. Details around our new facility and our capital campaign plans will be unveiled as the project proceeds.

## **Ambitious board and staff:**

To ensure the success of all of our goals and initiatives, the NaAC will be stewarded by a continuously learning, bold, and ambitious board and staff that is committed to financial sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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## It's 2026.

Thanks to our expanded focus on multidisciplinary programming, and our proactive embracing of digital tools that support our artists' training, creation, and production efforts, Calgary – and Canada – is seeing a dramatic rise in the number of exciting works being produced by artists with disabilities. These works are recognized as being truly avant-garde and needing their own distinct place in our arts and culture ecosystem. They travel across the country and around the globe as an inspirational message of hope and boundless possibilities. And perhaps most importantly, artists with disabilities see an incredibly bright future and know that they absolutely belong, and that their stories and perspectives matter.

The National accessArts Centre is a thriving organization with reach far into the corners of our vast country. Remote communities and other marginalized groups tap into our expertise and our resources to see how they themselves can use the power of the arts to lift themselves and be heard. Locally, our annual festival draws in unparalleled levels of attention and accolades for doing what has never been done on such a scale before – the creation of a platform where we empower artists with disabilities to share their stories, showcase their ideas, and truly inspire and shape the minds of the public-at-large.

We look back at 2021, and realize how forward-thinking it was for a group of individuals to hit that big “reset” button. How important it was to position our organization for ongoing, future success. And we are proud to have believed in ourselves – knowing that, as cliché as it sounds, **so much is possible if we simply believe.**

**RESET.  
REFOCUS.  
REIMAGINE.**

# National accessArts Centre

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**THE NATIONAL ACCESSARTS CENTRE ACKNOWLEDGES  
THE FOLLOWING OPERATIONAL PARTNERS:**

