



THE JOURNEY AHEAD

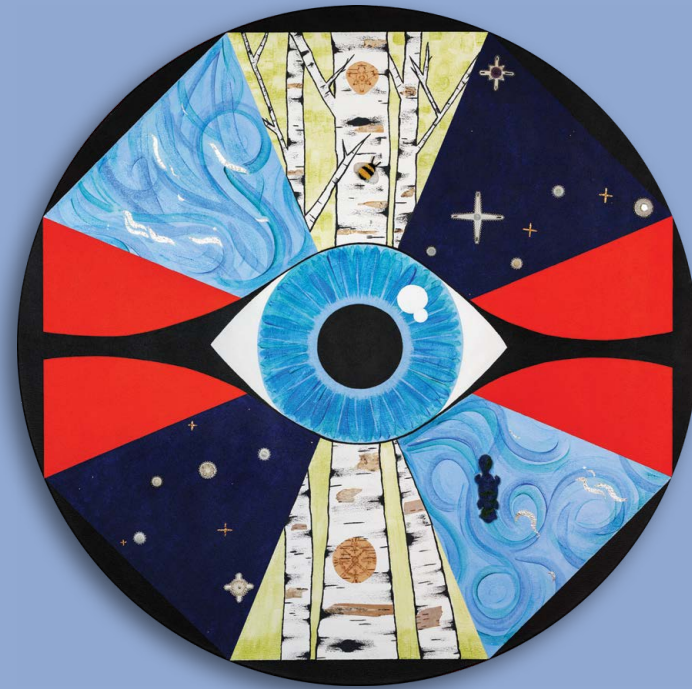
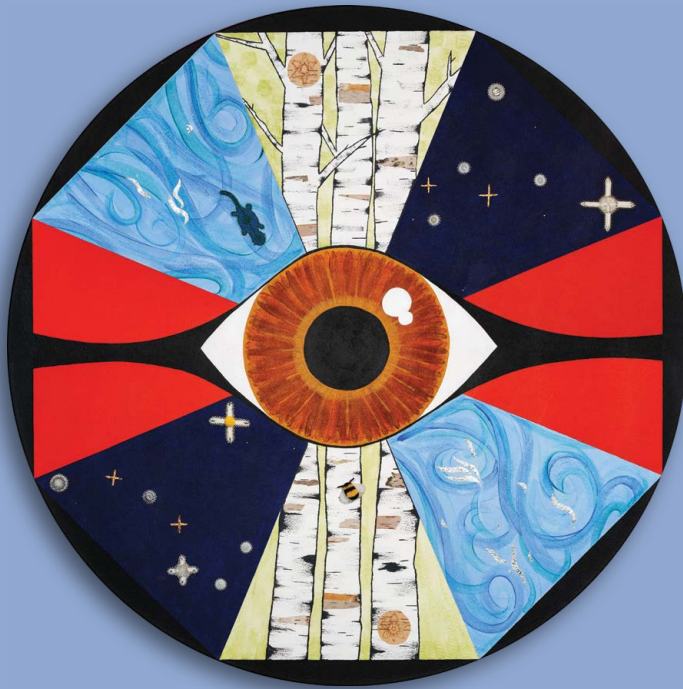
National Arts Centre 2023–2026 Strategic Plan



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS
Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.

Pangawogo Ninga Aki

Pangawogo Ninga Aki, or Heartbeat of Mother Earth, is a visual land acknowledgment and welcome from the Algonquin People to visitors of the National Arts Centre.



This mixed media art piece, created by the Algonquin artist Emily Brascoupé-Hoefler, is located in the Canal Foyer of the National Arts Centre. The work encompasses aspects of Algonquin culture and tradition to welcome and extend teachings about Algonquin People and the geography of the region.



Land Acknowledgment

**Iyo Kichi Mazinibìgewogamig ate Anishinàbewakìng
ega wìkàd Anishinàbeg kà mìgiwewàdj odakìwa.**

Eko wayeshkàt Anishinàbeg abiwag ondaje. Tedibà wàkàhì kàgige Anishinàbeg kì màmandoseg ashidj kiyàbadj nongom Akikodjiwaning, Asinàbikà minitigong kaye iyo nibì nengishkodàdìmagak enì ànikodjiwang. Nayegàdj kàgìdàdj niga pimosemin ondaje àkìng kaye niga manàdjiyànànig Anishinàbeg kaye niga manàdjhìdimin.

Kichi Migwech.

**The National Arts Centre is located on the
traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe
Algonquin Nation.**

The Anishinabeg People have lived on this land since time immemorial. This region has been and continues to be a gathering place, from the sacred Akikodjiwan falls to the Asinabka island and the connecting waterways. We will walk gently on this territory, respecting the Anishinabeg People and one another.

Chi-Miigwetch.



Canada is our Stage

The National Arts Centre is Canada’s bilingual, multi-disciplinary home for the performing arts.

The NAC presents, creates, produces and co-produces performing arts programming in various streams — the NAC Orchestra, Dance, English Theatre, French Theatre, Indigenous Theatre, and Popular Music and Variety — and nurtures the next generation of audiences and artists from across Canada. The NAC is located in the National Capital Region on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation.

Mandate

As a Crown Corporation, the National Arts Centre reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The NAC is governed by the *National Arts Centre Act*, which defines its mandate as follows: to operate and maintain the Centre; to develop the performing arts in the National Capital Region; and to assist the Canada Council for the Arts in the development of the performing arts elsewhere in Canada.

The NAC’s 2023–2026 Strategic Plan was approved by the NAC Board of Trustees, which consists of Chairperson Guy Pratte, C.M., and members Alex Benay, Angela Birdsell, Yazmine Laroche, Derral Moriyama, Sanjay Shahani, Mark Sutcliffe (ex-officio), Mayor of Ottawa, and France Bélisle (ex-officio), Mayor of Gatineau.



Cover photo: *Reggae Roots* is an original live experience that reflects on the social, cultural and spiritual importance of reggae. Imagined by the Jamaican-born, Halifax-based vocalist Jah’Mila and NAC Orchestra Creative Partner and Principal Youth and Family Conductor Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, the creation of this ambitious concert was championed by the NAC Orchestra. (Curtis Perry)

Left photo: An audience view of a NAC Orchestra Pops concert in Southam Hall. (Curtis Perry)




Photo: Siphesihle November and Hannah Galway
in *Angels' Atlas*, choreographed by Crystal Pite
and co-produced by The National Ballet of Canada
and Ballet Zürich. (Karolina Kuras, courtesy of
The National Ballet of Canada)

Caring For What Matters

We are fragile.

Individually and collectively.

Sometimes there is power in being fragile.

Like crystal.

Like a flower.

Like the heart.

Like the Earth.

Like silence.

Fragile like the moment when the audience starts streaming into the theatre
and the air grows thick with the sound of their voices,
or when the lights dim to tell us that the show is about to begin.

Like the hush that settles over the house; that delicate silence that climbs
onstage, tiptoeing over the set, gliding into the wings.

Like the quiet breathing of the artists in the wings.

Like their quickened heartbeats.

Like the moment of total darkness when they take their place onstage,
the inhalation before they sing the first note, take the first step,
say the first line of dialogue.

This is the power we will work to harness in our theatre,
both onstage and in the wings.

We will work to embrace the fragility of Art...
and its ability to be of service.

We will listen closely to the time in which we find ourselves,
so we can put it on our stages and examine it from all angles.
As artists, as audiences, as citizens together.

These are times that call us to be humble.

As Canada's National Arts Centre, we are choosing
to embrace the fragility of these times.

With humility — in place of certainty — we are determined to take care.

Because when something is fragile, you treat it with care.

A Message from Christopher Deacon, President and CEO

An actor, poised in the wings, takes a deep breath and, plunging into the action on stage, joins the other characters in the drama. They are on a journey, a hero's journey, a lover's journey — regardless — the character is driven forward by desire. As an audience, we throw our lot in with them and join them on the journey. Where their story unfolds to reveal authentic vulnerability, a universal human quality, we can relate. We share their goals, their fears, their strengths and weaknesses. For the duration of the performance, we see the world through their eyes.

The magic of the performing arts lies in its invitation to breathe deeply, to set aside the cares of the day, to dream, to reflect, and to exit the performance hall renewed or changed.

The poetry of dance, the romantic sweep of orchestral music, the poignant lyrics of a folk song, or the gripping drama of a play — the experience is unique to each audience member and yet something we share in community.

The National Arts Centre is a house of dreams, an idea of creativity and story that takes flight on stages across the country through our collaborations and partnerships with artists and arts companies coast to coast to coast. It's an idea about creation, production and co-production, performance and learning through the arts of the stage.

In 2020, the performing arts was changed profoundly by the pandemic and calls for social justice, and would soon be challenged by economic shocks that have confronted us all. We set ourselves on a course: to work with others across the country to lead a revival of the performing arts. During the three years of that Strategic Plan, we heard from arts stakeholders that we were playing a helpful, important role, and that we should push ahead on that course.

Today, audiences are returning with new enthusiasm, sometimes in large numbers, but not consistently. There is greater diversity on Canadian stages, in artistic leadership positions, and in our audiences. But there is much more work to be done. Now is a moment of fragility and promise, like the moment just before an artist goes onstage.

And so, in 2023, as we look ahead to the road that awaits us, we recommit to the journey.

We recommit to working with others to build a performing arts sector that is more creative, adaptive, and relevant to communities. One that is equitable, diverse, accessible and welcoming to all. One that advances environmental sustainability and reconciliation with Indigenous nations. So that the art on the stages reflects all of what Canada is becoming.

Join us on the journey.



Photo: Samantha Hill and Amaka Umeh in *Fall On Your Knees*. Set Design Camellia Koo, Costumes Judith Bowden, Lighting Leigh Ann Vardy. Adapted for the stage by Alisa Palmer and Hannah Moscovitch. Co-created and written by Hannah Moscovitch, co-created and directed by Alisa Palmer. (Dahlia Katz).

A theatrical adaptation of the iconic Canadian novel by Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Fall On Your Knees* was an unprecedented partnership between NAC English Theatre, Vita Brevis Arts and Canadian Stage (Toronto), Neptune Theatre (Halifax) and the Grand Theatre (London). *Fall On Your Knees* was made possible with support from lead donors Margaret Fountain, C.M., D.F.A. (hc), D.H.L (hc), and David Fountain, C.M., of Halifax, as well as the *National Creation Fund*, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Toronto Arts Council.



Vision

We believe the performing arts are vital to the human experience.

A house of dreams for the Canadian performing arts, the National Arts Centre will work with artists and arts organizations from across this land to revitalize our sector.

We are on a journey, committed to ensuring that equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, accessibility and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples will guide our actions.

Photo: *Un. Deux. Trois.* (Jonathan Lorange)

Written and directed by French Theatre Artistic Director Mani Soleymanlou, *Un. Deux. Trois.* opened at the NAC in September 2022 and toured Vancouver, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Toronto, Montréal, Québec City, Caraquet and Moncton. Co-produced with nine theatre companies, and supported by the *National Creation Fund*, the epic trilogy featured nearly 40 Francophone actors from across the country.



Values

Creativity

Inspired by artists and creators, we take risks and pursue bold ideas.

Grounded in communities

We are in constant conversation with communities, learning and listening as we go, striving to create experiences that connect and inspire.

Sense of belonging

We value the dignity and well-being of artists, partners, audiences and staff. We work to ensure that the NAC is an open, safe space where everyone knows they belong.

Generous collaboration

We are enriched by our collaborations with artists and arts organizations across the country. We commit to generous, respectful and long-lasting relationships.

Walking gently on the land

We pledge to activate the role of the performing arts to help create a green and just future.

Children of today, future of tomorrow

We aim to spark a sense of wonder and endless possibility in young people through the arts. Awakening imaginations offers hope for the future.



Photo: Else Charlem Danielsen and Tara Kuppaaq in the NAC Indigenous Theatre/NAC English Theatre co-production of *The Breathing Hole / Aglu* ᐱᓄᓄ. Set and Puppet Design Daniela Maselis, Costume Design Samantha McCue, Original Costume Design Joanna Yu, Lighting Design Leigh Ann Vardy. (Fred Cattroll)

The Breathing Hole / Aglu ᐱᓄᓄ follows Angu'ruaq, a one-eared polar bear, on a 500-year journey through the Arctic, tracing the paths of colonialism into a 21st century ravaged by climate change. Originally written and presented in English, the production played a role in preserving Nattilingmiutut, an Inuit dialect. Commissioned by Indigenous Theatre and English Theatre, the translation was the culmination of years of consultation with elders and community members primarily from the community of Gjoa Haven. The script is now the largest piece of written text in the dialect. *The Breathing Hole* received support from the National Creation Fund.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1

Develop the Canadian Performing Arts Through the Work on the Stage

Priorities:

- Present a broad range of exciting work by diverse artists and arts organizations
- Invest in the creation and development of ambitious new work through the *National Creation Fund* and the programming of our artistic leadership
- Partner with Francophone artists and arts organizations to support the expression of Francophone culture and the French language across Canada
- Create professional development experiences for artists and arts professionals, notably from equity-deserving groups, at the NAC and in partnership with arts organizations from across the country

Photo: Meher Pavri, Neil D'Souza and Anaka Maharaj-Sandhu in Why Not Theatre's *Mahabharata*, produced in association with Barbican, London. Originally commissioned and presented by the Shaw Festival. Originally directed by Ravi Jain with Associate Director Miriam Fernandes, Set Design Lorenzo Savoini, Costume Design Gillian Gallow, Lighting Design Kevin Lamotte, Projections Design Hana S. Kim. *Mahabharata* received support from the *National Creation Fund*. (David Cooper)



Strategic Goal 2

Elevate Indigenous Voices and Stories at the NAC and Across the Land

Priorities:

- Strengthen and support the Indigenous Theatre department at the NAC
- Develop, create, co-produce and present Indigenous programming, ensuring the ongoing presence of Indigenous stories, culture and languages on the national stage
- Facilitate Indigenous-led knowledge-sharing in the performing arts throughout the land
- Continue to consult with Indigenous leaders and the host Anishinabe Algonquin Nation to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through the arts

Photo: Gordon Patrick White in *Little Red Warrior and His Lawyer*, written and directed by NAC Indigenous Theatre Artistic Director Kevin Loring. A joint production of Belfry Theatre (Victoria) and Savage Society (Vancouver), in association with NAC Indigenous Theatre. Set Design John Ducette, Lighting Design Jeff Harrison, Costume Design Sam McCue. (Trudie Lee)

Little Red Warrior and His Lawyer premiered at the Belfry Theatre in January 2022, and toured to Theatre Calgary and the NAC in 2023.



Strategic Goal 3

Engage Meaningfully with Audiences and Communities

Priorities:

- Provide an exceptional and accessible experience to our visitors, both at the NAC and online
- Through the lens of equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and accessibility, continue to build meaningful relationships with all communities so they know that they belong at the NAC
- Leverage technology to connect with Canadians and arts lovers everywhere

Photo: A few participants of *Black Out Night* at the NAC. (Godzspeed Communications)

NAC English Theatre's *Black Out Nights* invited Black-identifying audiences to experience theatre with their community and take part in a joyful event designed to cultivate a shared sense of belonging.





Strategic Goal 4

Support Engagement in the Arts for Children, Youth and Families

Priorities:

- Offer exceptional and unique programming for children and youth
- Develop and support educational content through *Arts Alive* for students, teachers and learners of all ages across Canada
- Work with communities and partners across the country to support learning and engagement in the performing arts

Photo: *BIG BANG Festival*. (Yana Kim)

A festival of musical adventures, *BIG BANG* invites children and families to the NAC to experience imaginative sound installations, activities and performances.



Strategic Goal 5

Foster Best Practices in Management

Priorities:

- Prioritize the health and well-being of staff, and promote equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and accessibility
- Create, enhance and sustain a modern workplace that responds to the evolving digital landscape and fosters innovation, creativity and collaboration
- Lead ecological change in the Canadian performing arts sector through environmentally sustainable approaches
- Steward the NAC through prudent financial management and diversified revenue strategies

Photo: NAC ushers. (John Arano)



**NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS**

Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.

1 Elgin Street
P.O. Box 1534, Stn B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5W1
1-866-850-ARTS

NAC-CNA.CA