

Equity Committee Public Update

February 24, 2021

The Art Gallery of Alberta's Equity Committee was formed in October 2020. The Committee consists of AGA staff and members of the Board of Directors. The Committee's Terms of Reference can be found [here](#).

The Committee has a co-chair model with three chairs each representing the AGA's full-time staff, part-time staff and the Board of Directors. Each co-chair is responsible for reporting of the work of the Committee to their colleagues and for communicating any feedback, questions or ideas back to the Committee.

From October to December 2020, Members of the Equity Committee led a series of staff-wide conversations to inform their colleagues about the work of the Committee and to establish clear processes for staff members to ask questions about the Committee and contribute their own ideas. These initial conversations were structured as an open dialogue with respect to issues of equity, inclusion and anti-racism as they relate to working at the AGA as well as to the organization's public responsibility to its communities. Moving forward, updates on the work of the Equity Committee will be included in regularly scheduled staff meetings.

On December 17, 2020 the AGA hosted a virtual community roundtable. This roundtable is just the first step in the AGA's journey to recognize and address inequities within our organization, both past and present, and within the visual arts and museum sectors more broadly. Our aspiration is to "understand what we don't understand" and translate that into meaningful, impactful change for our organization and the communities we serve. We also want to know where we have been successful so that we may build on those examples and honour the diversity of voices that have contributed to the AGA.

For this first initiative, invitees were recommended by members of the Equity Committee, and included representatives of the following organizations: CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton), Deaf Spectrum, Edmonton 2 Spirit Society, iHuman Youth Society, Imagination Miscellany, Nextfest, Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, and Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre. The roundtable was facilitated by the Colbourne Institute for Inclusive Leadership at NorQuest College.

We acknowledge that this list of first participants is not comprehensive nor fully inclusive, and focusses on organizations and people in Edmonton. As the AGA has a provincial mandate, we will expand participation across the province over the next few months, to include people and organization in Calgary, Lethbridge, Grand Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray and other urban and rural communities.

This first roundtable provided valuable guidance for the Equity Committee's next steps. Some of the common ideas that came out the discussion include:

- Mentorship opportunities for emerging/young/early-career artists and arts professionals
- Constructive feedback for artists who apply for AGA exhibitions/programs
- Increased representation of BIPOC artists
- More representation of narratives outside of the western art historical perspective

- Breaking down the psychological barrier that the AGA is an unapproachable and elitist organization
- Improvements to accessibility for those with limited mobility as well as to those living in remote communities
- Offering interpretive materials and programs in other languages, including sign language
- More engagement with communities outside of the downtown core

The Equity Committee's current priorities include:

- Planning additional community roundtables and community engagement opportunities
- Reviewing and updating Human Resources policies
- Anti-Racism training for AGA Staff and the Board of Directors
- Producing an equity report based on 10 years of the AGA's operational data (2010-2020)
- A public and online questionnaire about the history of the Alberta Biennial to assist in planning the future of the exhibition
- A new 3-year Strategic Plan that includes community engagement and inclusion at its core

Please check back for quarterly updates from the AGA's Equity Committee. If you have any questions or would like to share your own experiences and/or ideas, please contact info@youraga.ca.