

Statement from Dance Service Organizations

All dance artists, students, and workers need safer spaces. We recognize the existing cultures that endanger our communities, including sexual harassment, abuses of power, cultural insensitivity and disrespect, systemic racism, and power structures entrenched in colonial ideologies. We stand together in avowing these structures need to change.

We collectively acknowledge the systemic and pervasive power imbalances that exist in the dance sector. Within these dynamics, members of marginalized arts groups are particularly vulnerable to abuse, harassment and discrimination – women; Indigenous peoples; people of colour; people who are Deaf, disabled, and/or live with chronic or mental illness; people on the LGBTTIQ spectrum; 2Spirit people; and other equity-seeking people.

The power imbalances that structure the economies and ecologies of dance are made more complex by the ever-shifting needs and experiences of bodies in motion. Dance involves touching and intimacy, it implicates the surfaces where our bodies meet others. It necessarily includes the sensory memories, physical boundaries, and embodied feelings of all those who participate in making it. In this complex terrain, consent and safety are of the utmost importance. We must recognize that no space can currently be considered entirely safe for everyone, but it is essential that we work diligently to make the spaces where we meet and dance safer, especially for marginalized bodies. Safer spaces and greater trust between dance practitioners facilitate artistic freedom and the capacity to take artistic risks in a manner respectful of all bodies. In the long term, we acknowledge that safer spaces need to be maintained, and processes re-evaluated consistently to ensure they continue to support healthy working environments.

We need to change the culture of dance that allows for one artist, choreographer, or director to have unequivocal power. We need to address working dynamics wherein employers or employees can disrespect the rights of their colleagues. We will encourage policies and reporting procedures in every studio and office across the country, and make qualified intervention and mediation available to all. We are committed to shifting how our milieu understands individual responsibility and collective accountability, in ways that enable all dance workers to feel heard, protected, and supported.

We are working towards the development of incident reporting tools, anti-harassment clauses for engagement contracts, resources of qualified equity interveners/mediators, and a network of service organizations that can support independent artists and company members in resolving incidents of harassment.

We are also fostering change in board and leadership composition to ensure that equity-seeking communities are purposefully engaged in agenda-setting and decision-making positions within the sector. Only by centering those who have been – and continue to be – marginalized by our current structures, can we generate arts spaces that are truly equitable for all.

In solidarity:

