

## 2nd Blog Post, July 2017: The Literature

The Canadian dance service ecosystem has gone through numerous configurations over the years, alternately fracturing due to competing needs within the sector, consolidating as a result of funding cuts, and giving birth to new organizations to serve contemporary needs. This is not the first time that the organizing structure of dance services in Canada has been under review, and it's important that this project learns important lessons from the past. We're starting from a good place, given the extensive amount of research that precedes us, not least the Canadian Dance Mapping Study.

Dance is frequently cited as the least resourced of the arts sectors in Canada. This grievance also extends to its service organizations. What's more, the resources that do exist are rarely equitably distributed across the sector. While dance service organizations have historically provided much-needed support for dancers and dance organizations working in ballet and contemporary dance in the major cities, practices such as Indigenous dance, racialized dance, disability dance, and dance outside the major cities have not received the same level of support. This historical inequality of service within the sector has resulted in the uneven playing field for different dance forms we see today.

Despite many valiant efforts to make the system fairer, some parts of the dance world continue to be better served than others. There is inequity in representation, funding, political power, and resources. Dancers and dance companies in the major cities have a wealth of services at their doorstep; those in rural regions typically need to look farther afield. Marginalized groups tend to be underrepresented on the boards and staff of service organizations, and thus have fewer seats at the table when it comes to decision-making power.

The service organizations also face challenges in adapting themselves to provide a more equitable offer for the sector. With low membership numbers from marginalized groups, it is difficult for dance service organizations to prioritize their needs; however, unless they start recognizing these specific needs, they will have difficulty attracting more of these members. Moreover, a lack of reliable data hampers their efforts to understand and advocate for the whole of the dance sector.

This is what we want to help CDA understand in more detail via the survey we have launched. Our survey asks about how much you value dance service organizations in their current state; how they could change to better serve your needs; and how well they're doing in being open, inclusive, and reflective of Canada's identity. An online survey can be a relatively blunt tool, but there's also plenty of space for comment and feedback.

**-James Doeser and Melissa Wong**