

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025



canadian  
dance  
assembly

assemblée  
canadienne  
de la danse

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the Canadian Dance Assembly, as a National Arts Service Organization, recognize our responsibility in reconciliation. This sacred land has been the site of dance for more than 15,000 years. Our organization is based in Tkaronto (colonially known as Toronto) and we give thanks to the caretakers of this territory: the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee (The People of the Longhouse), Chippewa, and the Anishnaabe nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We give thanks to the nations recorded and unrecorded, acknowledged and unacknowledged, who also share the responsibility of caring for this territory. We honour the Dish With One Spoon treaty and our responsibility to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, the Meeting Place of Tkaronto is still the home to many First Nations, Inuit, & Metis people from across Turtle Island.

We are grateful for the teachings of Indigenous peoples, colleagues, Elders, and peers, sharing traditional and contemporary Indigenous knowledge.

For the ability to dance and celebrate on this land.

For creative freedom.

We are committed to elevating Indigenous voices and actively seeking knowledge to deepen our understanding. We believe in sharing resources so that we can collectively honour and uphold treaty responsibilities, and practice on the land that we call Canada today. We are committed to working together to build a better relationship with each other and with the land.

# INTRODUCTION

**As the Canada Dance Assembly (CDA) enters 2022, we have collectively focused our aspirations and energies into a three-year strategic plan that we feel will guide and strengthen our organization and better enable us to serve our membership.**

As part of the development of our plan, we have engaged dance communities across Canada to discuss the current dance ecosystem and learn from stakeholders what the organization should prioritize in the years to come. The planning process was designed to ensure a diversity of voices were heard including Indigenous peoples, culturally diverse artists, Deaf and disabled artists, and remote, rural and Northern artists. These conversations were expanded upon within our organization to develop a plan that resonates with our times and the range of experiences across the dance sector.

The resulting plan is intended to be a living document that provides focus to our actions, advances existing work while creating new models for our programming, outreach and advocacy, so that we may continue to steer a national conversation about the dance sector in Canada.

# SUMMARY

## Over the next three years, CDA will:

- Advocate for greater equity, support, visibility and engagement on national, regional, and community levels
- Communicate and listen with transparency, clarity and respect
- Foster a culture of care, empathy, and openness
- Develop participatory and radical inclusion, equity, support and access within dance communities in Canada
- Lead the dance communities in Canada in supporting and valuing a greater diversity of artists, artistry, and audiences
- Demonstrate true and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- Have a national impact on both the dance ecosystem in Canada and society as a whole

## Please note:

The actions that support these priorities, as well as an overview of our mandate, vision and core values are expanded upon in our complete strategic planning document. A supporting appendix document outlines the desk research, conversations and information gathering that contributed to our plan. We believe that CDA's Three Year Strategic Plan (2022-2025) sets a clear direction for our immediate future and outlines a path for continued exploration, learning, advocacy and support within the dance ecosystem. We look forward to taking this path with you.

# OUR KEY AREAS

We have also identified four key areas under which to focus our strategic priorities and further developed tangible actions that foster:

## 1

### Advocacy

- Amplify the visibility and support for equity deserving artists and cultural workers in the dance sector through empowering them to participate in and co-create our ongoing advocacy work
- Identify new ways to reduce barriers and hierarchies within the dance ecosystem through listening, knowledge sharing, communication and support

## 2

### Equity, diversity, inclusion and access

- Commit resources (i.e. staffing, programming, and communications) to develop participatory and radical inclusion, equity, support and access
- Develop awareness, advocacy and support systems that empower the dance sector in Canada to deal with harassment and oppression in accountable and transformative ways

## 3

### Communications

- Review internal and external communications across all platforms to reflect and embody our vision, mission and values
- Reposition and resource communications as an integral part of programming

## 4

### Relationship-building

- Evaluate the systems and models that govern how we engage with members, dance communities, staff and the National Council through the lens of care, empathy and openness
- Develop our values and working practice so that they are both in alignment

# WHO WE ARE

## MANDATE, VISION AND VALUES

The Canadian Dance Assembly exists to facilitate the dynamic exchange of information relevant to Canadian professional dance of all forms and aesthetics. It strives to cultivate a strong national voice for Canadian professional dance and to support the development of resources for this field of artistic expression. It is the members of the Canadian Dance Assembly, through their activities, experience and participation, who provide the dynamism and synergy that make the organization vital in the Canadian arts milieu.”

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CONTINUES  
**OUR ROLE TO ADVOCATE  
FOR THOSE MOST DEEPLY IMPACTED  
IN THE DANCE SECTOR  
BECOMES EVEN MORE URGENT  
AND MISSION-CRITICAL**

## OUR PURPOSE

As part of the strategic planning process, we explored key questions to guide our current and desired role in the dance sector in Canada. First and foremost, we are most known for our advocacy role on the national or federal level, and we will continue to build on this strength.

We serve to support all of those involved in the dance sector, with priority given to the vulnerable, underrepresented and underserved areas across the dance sector in Canada.

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, our role to advocate for those most deeply impacted in the dance sector becomes even more urgent and mission-critical. From its early stages, the development of this plan has been focused on identifying how we can adapt and respond to the current moment.

# CORE VALUES

Our core values are a crucial part in guiding all of our actions in the future. These should also be regarded as integral to our identity. The following are the five core values that are the most important for our organization to communicate and embody:

## 1. PURPOSEFUL

We are intentional in our actions and responses to the needs of artists and cultural workers in the dance sector through our dedication to anti-oppression work and radical programming.

## 2. ACCESS

We advocate for the support and resourcing of all who practice and are committed to dance and centre equity, diversity, accessibility, inclusivity, transparency.

## 3. CARE

CDA is committed to honouring relationships and creating networks of care with and between individual artists and cultural workers, and dance organizations across the country.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We remain committed to our programming, outreach and advocacy work that has steered a national conversation about the dance ecosystem in Canada. These activities have defined our organization and provided a basis from which to build upon and refocus our role. Our guiding principles encompass our mission, vision and core values, irrespective of the goals achieved as a result of this strategic plan. As such, they are necessarily ambitious and aspirational, reflecting a belief in the agency of dance and the relevance of our organization.

### **Over the next three years, we will nurture and expand our ability to:**

- Advocate for greater equity, support, visibility and engagement on national, regional, and community levels
- Communicate and listen with transparency, clarity and respect
- Foster a culture of care, empathy, and openness
- Develop participatory and radical inclusion, equity, support and access within dance communities in Canada
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# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We have developed the following four (4) strategic areas and their corresponding priorities and actions that will radically focus our work for the period between the years 2022 and 2025.

## Advocacy

We strive to achieve positive, structural changes in the dance ecology so that it may better support the needs of dance artists across Canada. Advocacy is a foundational principle that supports much of our work. As the only national dance advocacy organization, we will expand on our work in raising awareness and advocating for change through the following:

- Amplify the visibility and support for equity deserving artists and cultural workers in the dance sector through empowering them to participate in and co-create our ongoing advocacy work
- Identify new ways to reduce barriers and hierarchies within the dance ecosystem through listening, knowledge sharing, communication and support

## Actions

1. In collaboration with value-aligned partners, continue to build programming that fosters dialogue, shares knowledge and skills to incorporate social justice and progressive action towards anti-harrasment, anti-oppression, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-ableist, and gender equity movements in dance
2. Co-create advocacy actions with equity-seeking groups and amplify their voices through communications and programming
3. Continue to collaboratively and respectfully develop events and programming that centers Indigenous knowledge and wisdom
4. Continue to inform and petition policy-makers, government groups, agencies, etc. on the specificities, concerns and evolving needs of dance artists, in particular equity seeking communities
5. Continue to offer outreach and town halls on government relations and support structures for the dance ecosystem. Ensure these programs are accessible and welcoming to underserved dance artists

# Equity, diversity, inclusion & access

We are deeply committed to dedicating time, energy and resources to actions that advance equity, diversity, inclusion and access across all facets of our organization and the dance ecosystem. This work requires both strength and compassion, and calls for authentic exploration, deep listening, and collaboration in order to remove barriers to access and allow all artists to thrive.

It is important to note that while equity and support are highlighted within this strategic priority, each strategic priority will be considered through an equity, support and anti-oppression lens.

- Commit resources (i.e. staffing, programming, and communications) to develop participatory and radical inclusion, equity, support and access
- Develop awareness, advocacy and support systems that empower the dance sector in Canada to deal with harassment and oppression in accountable and transformative ways

## Actions

1. Seek experiential expertise and advice in order to develop an organization wide framework that supports radical and participatory inclusion, diversity, equity, support and access
2. Commit resources to completing the anti-racism policy, which will be integrated into our workings and culture
3. Actively strengthen existing partnerships and seek out new opportunities to support knowledge sharing and collective action, especially with Indigenous, Afro-descendant, racialized and equity seeking communities, rural dance communities, as well as value-aligned arts organizations
4. Seek value-aligned funders, granting bodies and collaborators to support these EDIA actions and the participants working towards change
5. Continue to collaboratively and respectfully co-develop events and programming that are inclusive of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom

# Communications

We face the challenge of all national member-driven organizations to speak and be relevant to our audiences across the country, regardless of language, geography, circumstances and experience. While the current communications have served our organization well, there is room for improvement, especially with regard to visibility, clear articulation of value propositions, ease of engagement and leveraging digital technologies. Some of this work is underway as we have recently launched a new website that greatly improves the user experience. However, our capacity and effectiveness to serve and reach a national audience is an ongoing and evolving process.

- Review internal and external communications across all platforms to reflect and embody our vision, mission and values
- Reposition and resource communications as an integral part of programming

## Actions

1. Continue to review communications to identify areas for growth and change.
2. Evaluate current communications on:
  - a. The tone of voice, i.e. warm, welcoming, engaging, provocative, timely and accessible;
  - b. French, English and ASL translation; and
  - c. Alignment with our values and services
3. Revisit and develop the communication strategy with the knowledge gleaned from the communications review. Explore the use of digital platforms and tools specifically suited for our needs for efficient, creative and effective communications.
4. Consider a brand redevelopment and secure funding if needed
5. Secure funding to support the implementation of the communications strategy, potential brand development and the creation of new or modified communication and digital assets such as The Dance Map

# Relationship-building

To center our values in our actions, we will work towards removing barriers to engagement, remnants of old hierarchies and western-centric modes of practice to instead foster a community of care, empathy, openness and respect within the dance ecosystem, starting with our own organization. We recognize that this work requires care and facilitation to mitigate any potential harm, especially when addressing meaningful but difficult topics.

- Evaluate the systems and models that govern how we build relationships with members, dance communities, staff and the National Council through the lens of care, empathy and openness
- Develop our values and working practice so that they are both in alignment

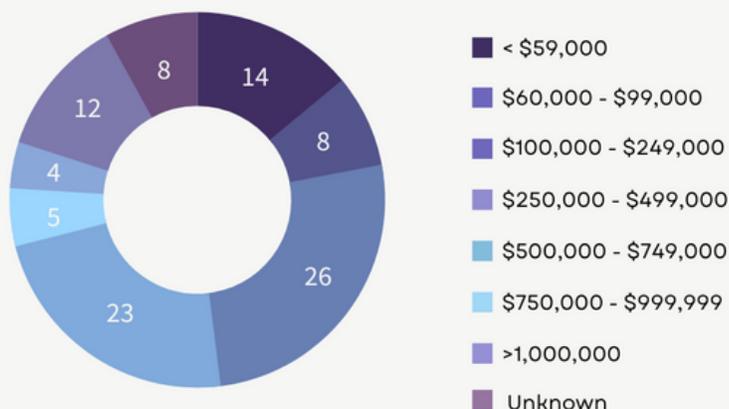
## Actions

1. Evaluate the current membership model to ensure membership requirements and benefits reflect our commitment to addressing historic inequities and systemic barriers
2. Review organizational capacity and evaluate the need for additional resources (staffing, funding, partnerships, etc.) to support current and future programming, fundraising and strategic initiatives
3. Review our by-laws and policies to ensure they align with our values and support our organization as we evolve
4. Create support systems for staff and members that promote wellness and the deep work of new systems and models of practice

The Canadian Dance Assembly (CDA)'s members include over 100 organizations and 500 individuals, including everyone who contributes to making and sharing dance: artists, students, performers, choreographers, producers, managers, teachers, companies, collectives, service organizations, presenters, educational and training organizations, supporters, enthusiasts...and more.

# CDA MEMBERSHIP AT A GLANCE

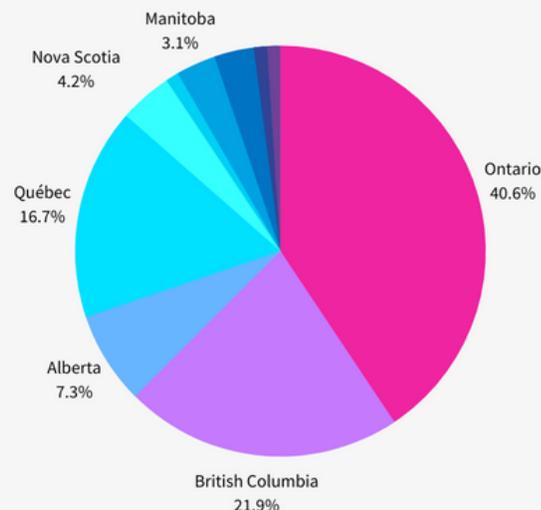
**CDA organizational membership by monthly operating budget**



## The benefits of being a member of the Canadian Dance Association:

Membership helps you stay informed, connected, and active in a large dance network across Canada to have your needs represented on a national level. Membership also offers direct member benefits and communications, to support your own practice and areas of interest through discounts, advocacy support, and sharing and learning. We connect dance communities, share knowledge, and monitor government policies to keep you regularly informed in your work.

**CDA organizational membership by province**





Above all, the Canadian Dance Assembly cherishes Canadian dance in all its multiplicity. The Canadian Dance Assembly, in its statements and in its actions, values pluralism. As a result, we strive to be an open and accessible organization to all genders, races, bodies, and sexualities; everyone can dance.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**WE THANK YOU**  
**FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN**  
**OUR PROGRAMS**