The 35//50 Initiative

August 1, 2020

To our colleagues in the artistic industry,

Led by a coalition of BIPOC[1] artists we, the members of the Mohkinstsis (including the city of Calgary) theatre and dance community, recognize and appreciate the various statements, commitments, and initiatives you have taken on in response to the Black Lives Matter Movement. In the spirit of ongoing engagement, we would like to invite you to commit to the 35//50 Initiative. Our goal in this work is to offer a meaningful action for our artistic community to take steps towards a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible future in the performing arts.

The 35//50 Initiative is based on two facts:
Between 35-43% of our city are BIPOC and rising[2]
Only 17% of employed professionals in our artistic community are BIPOC (as of 2017).

Over the next three years, we are committed to seeing our civic landscape more equitably reflected in our professional landscape: **a minimum of 35% BIPOC and 50% women or non-binary[3] people in paid, professional positions**. Hence the 35//50 Initiative. While our main focus is on BIPOC representation within our city we firmly believe in intersectionality and that this work can also advance gender equity.

To successfully shift this discrepancy by 2024-2025 we need your ongoing commitment. We welcome you into this initiative to hold organizations in Mohkinstsis mutually accountable in reflecting the place where we work and live. Following the immense changes brought on by both the Black Lives Matter movement and COVID-19, this renewed sense of purpose presents an opportunity to move forward in a bold new way. We believe this initiative will lead to a stronger, more creative and more diverse community of artistic leaders, performers, and audiences.

We've selected 2024-2025 as a target date as it aligns with the census cycle of the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary will collect data in 2021, and the Calgary Arts Development Authority will conduct a comprehensive survey of our artistic sector in 2021-2022. This allows three years to respond to the changing data regarding the demographics of our city, and presents an opportunity for our artistic sector to prove itself as a cultural leader.

In the short term, we would like each organization to track the numbers of their administrative and artistic teams of those who identify as BIPOC and those who identify as women or non-binary. In the spirit of transparency, we ask that this demographic information be gathered and made publicly available at the end of each artistic season in order to present an ongoing narrative of our organizational efforts. We aim to display a shift both qualitatively and quantitatively, and will differentiate decision making

positions and boards of governance from onstage performers and other artistic contributors. The members of the 35//50 Initiative will synthesize this data to assess our collective shift over time.

In the long term, we are also calling for a fundamental shift in how artistic organizations and projects are funded. We are offering a similar call to sponsors, investors, and funding bodies to uphold a similar mandate by 2024-2025, and offering proactive solutions for them to shift their processes. At this time, **our hope is that an organization that does not meet a minimum of 30% BIPOC - lower than our shared belief - see its access to funds restricted.**

To this end, we have prepared a template set of organizational beliefs. Please feel free to share this template with your Board of Directors, and consider adopting a version of it for use within your organization.

35//50 Initiative - Organizational Beliefs (Template)

We value equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

We recognize that our community is made up of approximately 35% BIPOC and 50% women and non-binary people.

We recognize the artistic community hasn't reflected the make-up of our community.

We believe that representation within our organization will lead to a greater equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within our community.

We understand to achieve this goal, significant investment in the following will be required to ensure equitable hiring practice and a healthy work environment for BIPOC staff and contractors:

- *Anti-racism organizational transformation*
- *Establishment of*
    - *Equitable Hiring Policies*
    - *Anti-Harassment Policies*
    - *HR procedures (onboarding and offboarding policies)*
    - *Harassment reporting (third party) mechanism*
- *Ongoing Anti-oppression training for all permanent staff and boardÂ*

We are committed to our organization reflecting our community.
This includes our:

Organization

- *Artistic Leadership (Artistic Director, Executive Director, etc.)*
- *Producer / Curator*
- *Educational Director*
- *Board of Directors*
- *Administrative Staff*

Programming

- *Writer / Choreographers / Creators*
- *Directors / Designers*
- *On-stage performers*
- *Technical / Backstage artists*

We aim to have our organization be made of a minimum 35% BIPOC and 50% women + non-binary by 2024-2025 season. We are committed to tracking and reporting on our progress towards this goal.

We believe that organizations who cannot commit to a certain level of representation should receive restricted or probationary funding.

We recognize this work is difficult. It offers unique challenges to organizations who are often met with a huge variety of difficulties. However, we are capable of bringing positive change to Alberta through these transparent actions and making our workplace safer for a wider range of artists. This work is underway across Canada and we hope you will be part of the change.

Please post a public response by August 31, 2020 acknowledging receipt of this letter, and outlining your next steps with regard to your organizational participation in the 35//50 Initiative. Please note that all signatories are committed to prioritizing work with organizations who share in these beliefs and strive to uphold them at every opportunity.

Sincerely,

Co-contributors (listed alphabetically):

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Steve Gin
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See attached document for signatories

Notes and Resrources

Land Acknowledgement
Spanning generations, acknowledgement of the land is a traditional custom of Indigenous people when welcoming outsiders onto their land and into their homes. Since time immemorial, Mohkinstsis (the land situated around the juncture of the Elbow and Bow Rivers) has been a meeting place for a diverse range of Indigenous peoples, who have enriched this land with their histories, languages, and cultures. Non-Indigenous people have benefitted from the presence of Indigenous nations and people on this land through their generosity, hospitality, and knowledge.

It is in that spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, honour and acknowledge the territory and oral practices of the indigenous people of Treaty 7 which includes the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Stoney Nakoda: Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley, and Tsuut'ina nations. We also acknowledge that this territory is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. It is all of our responsibility and duty to engage in and demonstrate leadership on reconciliation. Take your own first steps in doing so by reading the:
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action

Black Lives Matter YYC
This work in our industry is a direct response to the disproportionate violence on Black and Indigenous people in Canada. The continued voices of the Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and Black Arts Matter movements have inspired us to take these steps towards a more inclusive and diverse artistic community.
https://www.blacklivesmatteryyc.com

YYC Theatre Stats
https://chromatictheatre.ca/yyc-theatre-stats/

Sources:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Calgary - BIPOC / Visible minorities 26.2% in 2006, 32.8% in 2011, 42.4% in 2016
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmonton#Demographics - 37.1% BIPOC in 2016
- https://calgaryartsdevelopment.com/publications/equity-diversity-inclusion/ - artists who are visible minorities make up 15%

[1] BIPOC / IBPOC - This term stands for 'Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour,' it is meant to unite all people of colour in the work for liberation while intentionally acknowledging that not all people of colour face the same levels of injustice. The term aims to emphasize the historic oppression of black and indigenous people, as does the term IBPOC, which purposefully puts the first peoples of this land first.

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Calgary#Ethnicity

[3] Recognizing that gender identities are complex and unique to each person, we use the term women to include all people who identify as women, including trans and intersex women, and non-binary to welcome those whose gender identity and/or gender expression fall beyond the social construct of a gender binary, including, but not limited to: non-binary, two-spirit, genderqueer, GNC (gender non-conforming), and agender people.

After consultation, an amendment was made Sept 19, 2020 to replace a previous version that used ‘female’ rather than ‘women.’